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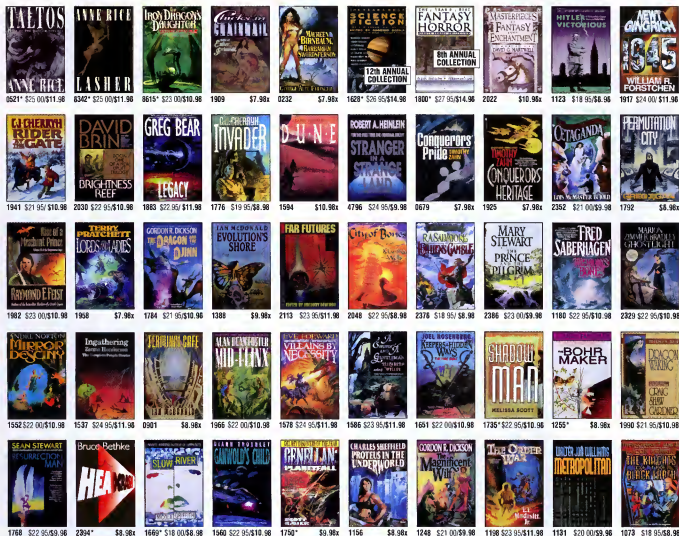


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By ALLISON VILLONE

## The Sci-Fi Channel in the U. S. and Europe promises scary movies and classic science fiction favorites.

**H**ERE COMES THE BRIDE ... AND A VAMPIRE, a monster, a wolf man, and a swamp creature! The Sci-Fi Channel in the United States springs into action in March with **Big Scary Movie Show Week**, a five-day film festival. The festival begins with Bela Lugosi's most enduring screen persona, the vampire count of

the 1931 horror classic *Dracula*. It airs Sunday, March 3 at 9 p.m. ET\* and 1 a.m. on Sci-Fi.

Stormy nights and crazed villagers abound as Boris Karloff stars in the definitive 1931 version of *Frankenstein*, the famous tale of a mad scientist who makes a monster. The Sci-Fi Channel presents it Monday, March 4 at 9 p.m. and 1 a.m. Wedding bells are ringing for Elsa

Bradbury: An American Writer on the Sci-Fi Channel in the United States. This one-hour special focuses on the life and work of the prolific author of such science fiction classics as *Fahrenheit 451*, *The Illustrated Man*, and *The Martian Chronicles*. This is the latest installment in the Sci-Fi Channel's *Masters of Fantasy* series, which showcases sci-fi artists and their work, and has recently profiled Ray Harryhausen and the cast and crew of *The X-Files*. **Masters of Fantasy — Ray Bradbury: An American Writer** airs Thursday, March 7 at 7 p.m. and 11 p.m.; Saturday, March 9 at 10 p.m. and 2 a.m.; Sunday, March 10 at 8 p.m. and 12 a.m.; and Monday, March 11 at 1:30 p.m.

The human race needs a new home, and it's up to eight astronauts to find one, if it's not too late already. For the first time ever on television, the Sci-Fi Channel in the U.S. presents *Starquest*, an original Planetary Premiere movie. In *Starquest*, a group of eight highly trained astronauts is selected to scout out a new planet for future colonization. Placed in suspended animation for one hundred years, the crew awakens to find devastating changes have occurred on Earth. A struggle for power and dissension among the astronauts threatens the success of the mission. Emma Samms (*Models, Inc.*) and Steven Bauer (*Starface*) star. *Starquest* airs Saturday, March 16 at 8 p.m. and 12 a.m.; Sunday, March 17 at 5 p.m.; and Saturday, March 23 at 4 p.m.

Check out a week of *Twilight Zone* episodes focusing on time travel from March 18 through March 22 on the Sci-Fi Channel in the U.S. "Back There," "Walking Distance," "100 Yards Over the Rim," "The Rip Van Winkle Caper," and "The 7th is Made Up of Phantoms" will be shown. *Twilight Zone* airs daily at 7 p.m. and 11 p.m.

First there was *Pilot Playhouse*. Then there was *Final Curtain*. Now there is *Beginning of the End Playhouse*, the newest Premiere Event airing on the Sci-Fi Channel in the United States. U.S. viewers will have a unique opportunity to view the celebrated starts and famous finishes of classic science fiction series. The first and the last episodes of *Twilight Zone*, *She Wolf of London*, *Lost in Space*, and *War of the Worlds* will be presented. Part I airs Saturday, March 23 at 7 p.m. and 1 p.m. Part II airs Sunday, March 24 at 7 p.m. and 11 p.m.

In April, tune into *Twilight Zone* on the Sci-Fi Channel in the United States from April 15-19 for a week of episodes about Satan and a place called Hell. "Escape

*Continued on page 70*



"The Big Scary Movie Show Week," includes *The Bride of Frankenstein*. Ray Bradbury, below, is featured on *Masters of Fantasy*.

Lanchester in *The Bride of Frankenstein*, in which the monster creates a mate. James Whale directed this visually stunning sequel, airing Tuesday, March 5 at 9 p.m. and 1 a.m. The curse of the werewolf is passed along to Lon Chaney after a bite from Bela Lugosi in *The Wolf Man*. First-rate writing, acting, make-up and music highlight this 1941 classic, airing on the Sci-Fi Channel Wednesday, March 6 at 9 p.m. and 1 a.m. **Big Scary Movie Show Week** concludes March 7, when explorers in the Amazon encounter something huge with gills in *Creature from the Black Lagoon*, directed by legendary science fiction trailblazer Jack Arnold in 1954. It airs Thursday, March 7 at 9 p.m. and 1 a.m.

Another science fiction legend, Ray Bradbury, is the subject of the special profile *Masters of Fantasy — Ray*



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## The Chess Set That Transcends Time and Space.



## Official word: *Star Trek* fans are "not insane." And Ripley isn't dead.

BY ROBERT MARTIN

**I**N SHOCKING NEWS FROM THE UNITED KINGDOM, a study presented before the annual meeting of the British Psychological Society has found the majority of *Star Trek* fans to be sane. Based upon responses to questionnaires distributed at two 1995 *Trek* conventions, the Northumbria University study found that most fans were motivated by "entertainment, fun, and social contact."

On the other hand, up to 15 percent of the studied group displayed some "signs of addiction." These include the use of *Star Trek* to alter moods, the need for increased amounts of *Trek* to produce such effects, and irritability when not exposed to sufficient *Trek*.



*Trek* addicts will enjoy "The *Star Trek* Experience" in Las Vegas. *Star Trek: The Next Generation*'s Patrick Stewart (right) has signed up for a role in Paramount's feature *Star Trek: Resurrection*.

Starting in March 1997, *Trek* addicts will be able to combine their vices when visiting the Las Vegas Hilton, where "The *Star Trek* Experience" is now being built, adjacent to the Hilton's lobby and a new casino. The attraction will give visitors a 22-minute "firsthand experience" of life aboard the starship *Enterprise* and on *Deep Space 9*. *ST* honcho Rick Berman is overseeing content development, along with veteran production designer Herman Zimmerman. Film and voice presence of various *Trek* actors currently is being negotiated, probably

in tandem with Paramount's efforts to secure talent for their feature *Star Trek: Resurrection*. (No, it's not James T. Kirk who gets resurrected.) *Variety* recently reported that Patrick Stewart has signed up for \$5 million.

At Twentieth Century-Fox, preproduction on the fourth *Alien* film nears completion. Joss (*Toy Story*) Whedon's script is now in the hands of the young team of director Danny Boyle and producer Andrew MacDonald, whose sole credits to date are the low-budget dark comedy *Shallow Grave*, and *Trainspotting*, a drama of dissolute youth, to be distributed by Miramax later this year.

Rumors, reported here a year ago, that Whedon's screenplay has Ripley reconstructed from DNA have been confirmed. The twist is that, in the cloning process, something goes horribly wrong. Money is currently being stacked in front of Sigourney Weaver in the effort to lure her back to the series for her post-mortem role, and similar stacks are mounting on Winona Ryder's table, to persuade her to take a co-starring role. The whole shebang, it is hoped, will be before the cameras by early summer for a 1997 release.

Another long-awaited SF blockbuster is Stanley Kubrick's *AI*, first put on Warner Brothers' list of projects over two years ago. Kubrick's *AI* script has been in development for several years, and is said to be inspired by Brian Aldiss's five-page short story "Super-Toys Last All Summer Long," and a series of "blue sky" sessions between Kubrick and British SF writer Ian Watson. WB finally ended their long silence on this project with their announcement of Kubrick's next film, a "drama of sexual obsession" entitled *Eyes Wide Shut*, to star Tom Cruise and Nicole Kidman. In the same announcement, Warner Brothers were careful to point out that *AI* remains a live project, for which most of the preproduction work has been completed.

Unofficially, *SFE* received word that test footage for *AI* was shot off the New Jersey coastline over a year ago. Kubrick did not consider the digital enhancements used to portray New York City, sunken beneath melted polar icecaps, sufficiently convincing. Another year of research and development, however, has brought the technology of CGI up to Kubrick's standards, within a budget that Warner will approve. Although Kubrick usually takes a lengthy hiatus between films, it is WB's hope that *AI* could start filming as early as 1997.

In a recent *New York Times* interview, George Lucas crit-

It's that moment just after you rip it off, when the circuits are still pumping 'cause they don't know what hit 'em, and they've got that expression on their face like "Hey that's my arm!"...the first gush of oil from the open socket...the lights in their eyes going dim...yeah, that's when I know...I'm alive.



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icized the producers of *Waterworld*, and Hollywood in general, for not taking advantage of the cost-saving benefits of digital technology. "They're about five years behind," Lucas said, indicating that *Waterworld* could have been brought in for half its cost, with no loss in production values over location shooting. Lucas predicted that the upcoming *Star Wars* movies will be big-screen events, but will cost only \$60-\$70 million each.

An earlier test of Lucas's word may be *Mars Attacks!* — at the final hour, Warner Brothers was prepared to put Tim Burton's invasion epic into turnaround because it looked too expensive, and Burton was unwilling to pare down the script's depiction of the wholesale conquest of Earth by big-brained Martians. After a series of intensive meetings with Industrial Light and Magic staff, Burton was able to return to WB with an approvable budget.

Lucas's *Times* interview was published just as Hollywood trades began speculating on whether ILM will maintain its tight relationship with Steven Spielberg now that ILM's leading competitor, Digital Domain, will be housed with DreamWorks in a new high-tech facility being built in the Playa Vista suburb of Los Angeles. At a press conference announcing the new facility, Spielberg was asked about his relationship with ILM, and replied that his loyalty would last as long as ILM remained competitive, an answer subject to interpretation. Currently, Dream-

## EIGHTH DOCTOR ANNOUNCED!

Having quietly entered pre-production in mid-December, Universal Television, Fox Television, the BBC, and producer Phil Segal began principal photography for the *Dr. Who* telefilm in January. Though no airdate has been announced, the sudden speed with which this is happening suggests an airdate during the May sweeps period, when ratings count the most.

It has been confirmed that actor Sylvester McCoy, the last to play the Doctor in the BBC series, will appear in an early sequence in order to "regenerate" into the person of actor Paul McGann, whose casting was recently announced by the BBC.

McGann, 36 years old, is a familiar face on British TV, and has been seen in the films *Aliens III* (as Golic), and in the second title role of *Withnail and I*. "The film will be loyal to the spirit of past series," McGann said in the BBC release, "but will find a fresh appeal too. Taking on such a role hasn't really sunk in yet. It's just beginning to dawn on me what all this means. Sylvester McCoy is a friend, so he's told me everything I need to know! I loved *Doctor Who* as a kid — William Hartnell used to terrify

me. My favorite villain was the Yeti, but the Daleks never did it for me."

Trevor Walton, senior V.P. Longform Programming for Fox said, "It's about time that *Doctor Who* became as famous and beloved in America as he is in England. I am thrilled that Paul McGann has come on board. He is a truly worthy successor."

Fans worried about an "Americanized" *Who* were assured that the director, Geoffrey Sax, is British, as are the producers (Philip Siegel and Peter Wagg) and the screenwriter (Matthew Jacobs). The Doctor's new "companion" will be Dr. Grace Holloway, played by Daphne Ashbrook (seen last year as Dr. Bashir's wheelchair-bound love interest in the *Deep Space 9* episode "Melora"). The Doctor's nemesis, The Master, will be played by Eric Roberts (recently seen as a villain in *The Specialist*).

Vancouver shooting for the \$5 million telefilm was to wrap in February, with additional location shooting to follow in San Francisco. A follow-up script may be ready, which will take the new Doctor into outer space.



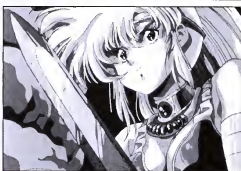
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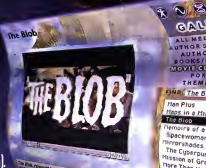
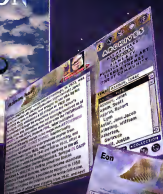
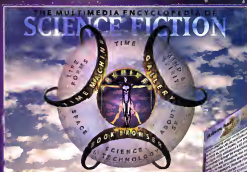
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The fourth Alien film concerns the cloning of Ripley. Something goes horribly wrong.

Works is committed to ILM for the effects of Jan de Bont's *Twister*, and Spielberg's own next film, the *Jurassic Park* sequel *Lost World*.

DD's James Cameron later told *Hollywood Reporter*, "There's definitely an enhanced access for us there, but it's more or less an intangible benefit that we can't really anticipate right now." The trades failed to mention the negative aspects of being neighbors with the Spielberg outfit; at Universal, several major producers found it difficult to keep top design talent in-house whenever effects-heavy Spielberg projects started up. In a recent friendly talent raid, Spielberg plucked George Clooney out of a firm deal for *The Green Hornet* at Universal in order to cast him in DreamWorks' first feature, *The Peacemaker*.

Meanwhile, ILM faces growing competi-

tion from two former employees — Ken Ralston, who left ILM to head up Sony Pictures Imageworks, and Phil Tippett. Ralston has been cherry-picking talent from his former co-workers at the House of Lucas, and Tippett's FX studio is rapidly expanding to handle the extensive CGI effects required for Paul Verhoeven's film of Robert Heinlein's *Starship Troopers*. Pixar animator Craig Good recently got a peek at Tippett's "bugs" (wartime slang for alien enemies in Heinlein's book), and says they look terrific. On the film's completion, Tippett will no doubt be ready to bid on the same films as the "big boys."

While the competition may grow heated, it may not have to be cutthroat; as Lucas pointed out, the Hollywood studios haven't begun to realize all that can be done with today's effects technology, particularly in the area of "virtual sets," a field that is rapidly opening the market for CGI outside of SF and horror, and a field that ILM has pioneered and developed. The proliferation and rapid expansion of top FX facilities may still not be sufficient to meet rising demand for services.

At any rate, Cameron is not waiting for crumbs to fall from George Lucas's table. While signing Cameron to an exclusive five-year deal (that will still allow Cameron to take elsewhere any picture that Fox refuses), Fox has agreed to buy several properties from the bankrupt studio Carolco, which includes *Terminator* sequel rights and the still-disputed *Spiderman* rights. Cameron



## STAR WARS TRILOGY UPDATE

George Lucas has looked upon ILM's restoration work on *Star Wars*, and pronounced it "good." It is now official that both *Return of the Jedi* and *The Empire Strikes Back* will receive similar treatment, with

enhanced visuals, sound, and possibly additional scenes as well. Lucasfilm and 20th Century Fox are currently negotiating a cofinancing deal for the grand undertaking, while nailing down release patterns for all three features.

already has a *Spiderman* script finalized, and is considering story lines for *Terminator III*. The Fox deal will also provide Cameron with the means to expand his Lightstorm production company into television development and production.

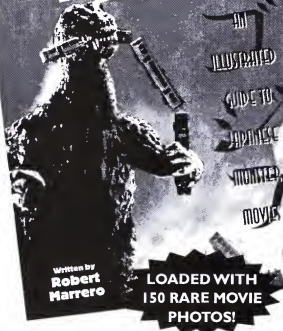
Arnold Schwarzenegger, a frequent Cameron player, is considering Turner Pictures' pitch for him to star in *The Fallen*, the

*Continued on page 34*

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RETAILER: DISPLAY UNTIL APRIL 30

## The Outer Limits becomes a 3-D virtual world in an ambitious new on-line game.

BY MELISSA PERENSON

**I**MAGINE THAT YOU COULD PLACE YOURSELF in another universe. An alternate reality very different from the one that governs your everyday existence.

Now imagine being able to put yourself at the center of an adventure involving your favorite science fiction universe. Not just a static "interactive" video game or CD-ROM adventure, but a game that involves real-time communications with other characters in the

game — characters who respond just like a thinking human (because in fact they are), a game where your actions help determine the course and outcome not only for yourself, but for other player-characters, too. Players who may be scattered across the world.



MGM Interactive and Worlds, Inc. are developing stories from *The Outer Limits* for their multiuser (a whopping 5,000 players simultaneously!) role-playing game. Will this episode "Dark Matters" find its way to the Internet?

For many science fiction aficionados, who tend to have a penchant for complete immersion in their favorite universe, this scenario would be like a dream come true. And thanks to modern technology, it is coming true sooner than you might think, with the impending arrival of a unique multiuser on-line game based upon MGM's *The Outer Limits* series (currently airing in the United Kingdom on Sundays at 1900 on the Sci-Fi Channel).

MUDs, MUSHes, and MOOs, text-only varieties of multiuser gaming, have existed on the Internet for years.

But *The Outer Limits* game is a ground-breaking project in terms of both technology and aspirations. Due by the fourth quarter of 1996, the game is a joint venture between MGM Interactive and Worlds Inc., an up-and-coming Seattle company, whose innovative application of three-dimensional technology delivered via the Internet's World Wide Web has been making headlines over the past year. *The Outer Limits* game will be the first multiuser on-line game to be crafted in a 3-D environment, much on the order of what you might find in such computer games as *Doom* and *Descent*, only with superior graphics and greater story depth. Moreover, the game will accommodate a whopping 5,000 players simultaneously; currently, no other on-line game comes anywhere close to that scope.

"*The Outer Limits* is one of MGM/UA's premier television properties," says Ron Frankel, executive vice president and general manager for MGM Interactive. "It's a broad property, there's a lot of great material to work with, as well as original material that we can create. So it was a natural for development in interactive, especially for on-line, because I think there's a strong crossover demographic between people who enjoy science fiction and people who are early adopters of new technologies and on-line services."

A former programmer himself, Frankel saw opportunity in providing what he calls "new consumer experiences in an on-line format with multiuser attributes that are both competitive and collaborative; it would really be on the cutting edge of gaming. I set out to look for the hottest on-line technologies to see exactly where we could go with this. With that in mind, I saw the stuff that Worlds Inc. was doing, and just thought it was the greatest. And we started talking to them, and there was a meeting of the minds as to what would make for a really interesting consumer experience."

Worlds Inc. (<http://www.worlds.net>) has already forged a name for itself by using the virtual reality technology called VRML+ in the creation of three-dimensional environments on the World Wide Web. The company has done some impressive, high-profile projects in the past months, including creating the Starbrite Pediatric Network in conjunction with Steven Spielberg. WorldsChat has attracted much attention for using a proprietary algorithm for speedy graphics compression and decompression on the fly, which in



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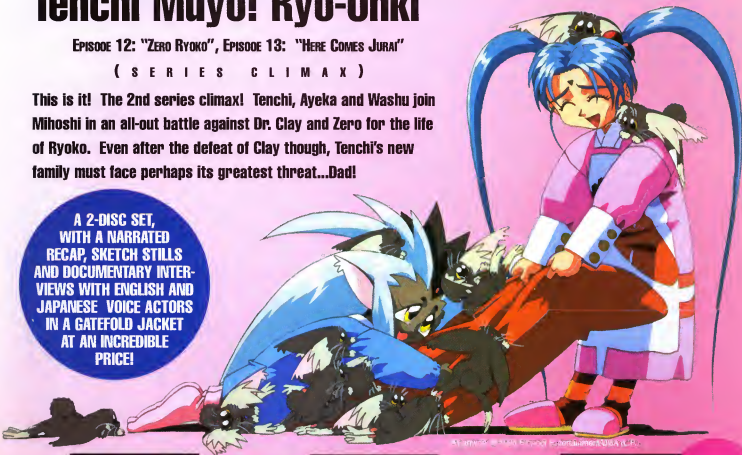
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turn allowed Worlds to add a 3-D face to the concept of chat-rooms. Since April 1995, more than 200,000 users have downloaded their WorldsChat viewer, and there have been over two million unique visits to the site generated without any publicity efforts by Worlds Inc.

Worlds' *AlphaWorld* is a real-time 3-D Web environment that's currently available for exploration, and is based on a different, experimental technology that's creating an entire Internet-based cybercity, where users can even build their own virtual homes. There are already 30,000 cybercitizens who've created 500,000 objects in this environment, and a Harvard Business School project is moving into the neighborhood, too.

At the time this column was written, *The Outer Limits* project remains in developmental stages, so many of the specifics about the game itself are vague. According to Ken Locker, vice president of Worlds' entertainment division, "The plan is that we will do a number of episodes of multiuser role-playing games that will be based on some of the stories from *The Outer Limits*. We'll introduce a new episode, which is basically a new game, about every year."

And don't expect this to bear much similarity to any computer game you've seen; this may be the opening bell of a complete social revolution. "Social computing is the next phenomenon of the Internet," says Locker. "We

think it's where computer science meets social science. We've taken the whole concept of these multiuser environments one step further by creating a 3-D, virtual environment, and then by creating an avatar, which is a digital representation of who you are, that you'll use as you go through the world, and that avatar is how people see you."

Although there will be up to 5,000 different avatars on-line at once, Locker cautions that there will be some similarities. "The way the game works, it's like chat-rooms [on the on-line services]. In a chat-room, after say twenty-six people, it forms a new room, and you have to decide which room you want to go in to. Obviously, you couldn't see 5,000 avatars on the computer screen at the same time; it would be ridiculous. So, there may be 5,000 people simultaneously playing the game, but you'll only be seeing another fourteen or fifteen people [or, more precisely, their avatars] in your environment, and those people will form the team unit that will go through that segment of the game together."

Because the game is built on the World Wide Web, you'll be able to log on and join a game at any time, from anywhere, and interact with people from across the globe. Once you've entered the lobby area, you'll choose your character; the game will begin when enough people have congregated in the lobby.

Protocol and logistical issues, particularly

from the gaming and interface perspectives, are still in the process of being worked out. "We're kind of inventing [the answers] as we go, because no one's really done this at this magnitude before," laughs Locker.

Obvious obstacles aside, the process of creating a game like this is no small challenge. Jeff Sullivan and Bruce Onder, two popular game designers who were most recently responsible for Activision's holiday release, *Spycraft*, worked closely with the enthusiastic producers of *The Outer Limits* series to craft three different scripts for the game, one of which ultimately became the first installment that you'll see on the Web. And those scripts are more than ten times as long as the standard script for a one-hour television drama. "The design documents, which are the blueprints of the game, are about a thousand pages long," says Locker. "The design document sets the stage, [defining] what the story structure is, what the backstories are, what the psychological landscape is, who the different characters are. It creates every permutation of how you play the game."

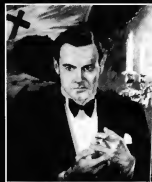
Then there are the technological concerns. "You have to begin at the functionality level," continues Locker, "designing all the functionality you need, and seeing what you can do under certain limitations." First among those considerations was the question of which technology the largest installed base of potential users have. The answers:

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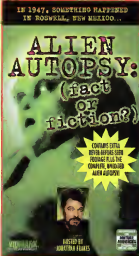
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analog, and not digital, phone lines, systems with 486 CPUs, 4MB of RAM, and a 14.4-Kbps modem (although the service is optimized for use on a 75-MHz Pentium system with 8MB of RAM).

"Within those constraints," says Locker, "we had to design a technology that gave a satisfying experience." In order to view *The Outer Limits* world, you will have to use the proprietary Worlds Inc. viewer that will be available on CD-ROM in retail stores and other distribution channels. Like the Worlds-Chat viewer that's available for downloading now, that viewer is your ticket to another world. As Locker explains, "What you're doing, really, is downloading the entire world, but it's uncompiled, unconstructed. And when you go on-line, the way we get very high performance is by just sending the x-y coordinates of where the players are in the world, and what part of the world should be rendered based on where they are."

Most current home computers can render graphics much more quickly than most modems can receive them. Allowing the user's computer to render the graphics, controlled by signals from the game's host computer, makes the most of the narrow bandwidth most Internet users now receive. "It's like sending e-mail; we're sending no images over the Internet," says Locker. The viewer compiles it from the existing, highly compressed information on the drive. It's sort of

a *Doom*-style engine, but actually with higher resolution and higher speed."

Anyone who's ever used Internet IRQ channels or a chat-room on an on-line service is familiar with the problem of speed — you type in a message and send it, and someone is first replying to the message you sent two messages ago. This latency is caused by the bandwidth limitations on the Internet. And the latency issue wasn't going to disappear just for Worlds Inc. "You have to actually build that into the game," says Locker. At the beginning, all game communications will be done in text, although Worlds expects to add voice capabilities fairly soon.

Some may argue that computer games such as these are tools for isolation, but Locker argues the opposite is the case. "These games are going to be both cooperative and competitive gaming. Certain parts of the game can be solved by a group effort, where several people have to do something in concert in order to get to the next level.

"What is interesting about on-line," notes Locker, "is the way that people use these environments; in these worlds it's kind of like a parallel universe, because you have an entire existence on-line. If you've spent much time in multiuser domain environments, you've seen that people have a whole life going in these environments. People meet, they get married, have weddings,

funerals ... they have everything. The real world is just another window on their existence. They call it RL, for real life, as opposed to on-line life. People who are really into it really don't distinguish — real life is just another click of the mouse. People sit with their screen on all the time. And there's two windows — the world they live in, and the world they interact with."

In addition to global participation, there are several advantages to delivering a game on-line. "We can actually change the script, unlike a CD-ROM, which is frozen in time. With an on-line game, we can download into the background — putting up new scripts, and new functionality. If we find out after three months that everyone is solving a certain part of the game, that it's too easy, we can just make it harder, so that they'll never win — so that we'll really frustrate them forever," Locker says, chuckling at the thought.

"One of the greatest advantages of on-line technology is that it's organic, in that it's a living environment, and you have the ability to modify it, which is its biggest difference from the other multimedia platform, CD-ROM. CD-ROM is really no different from a book; once you publish it, that's it. But the on-line world is a constantly changing environment, which allows you to constantly modify the game. That's a whole new level of creative control that does not exist in other media." □



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# Utopia in reverse; the worst of all possible worlds...

BY STEVEN PUCHALSKI

**M**ANY WORKS OF SCIENCE FICTION, from the earliest tales of Jules Verne to the present day, have highlighted humankind's obsession with the dream of a perfect world, where the social, economic, and political ills of the world we know have been left behind. Long before Verne, Saint Thomas More's essay

*Utopia* (Greek for "no place"), first brought this vision to the written page, while more modern

philosophical works, such as Huxley's *Brave New World* and Orwell's *1984*, gave readers harrowing glimpses in to the darker opposite side of that coin. The concept of Utopia — and its opposite, Dystopia — can also be seen on the screen in films as varied as *Things to Come*, *Metrop-*

robots, but containing enough philosophical meat to keep more daring moviegoers sated.

Gorgeously filmed in the hills of Ireland, and filled with intense, often surreal imagery, we're taken to the year 2293 to meet Sean Connery as Zed, the savage leader of a pack of gun-toting exterminators, who rid this barren wasteland of unnecessary human beings. Their orders come from Zardoz himself — a giant, flying stone head, which instructs them in the Law and provides them with enough guns and ammo to enforce it. But one day, Zed stows away inside the head and is taken aloft, landing in a pastoral country village named the Vortex, the home of the planet's telepathic, immortal rulers. Their security is maintained via this false god, built to keep the savages from their gates, thanks to Zardoz's elite band of warrior disciples. As their many long summers pass, certain of the immortals become "Apathetics" (they're the ones who shuffle about like well-dressed zombies from a Romero film); and unruly Immortals are punished with forced aging.

Obviously, few could mistake the Vortex for a true Utopia. This is an Eden gone rancid from neglect, where no one seems to enjoy themselves, as immortality brings boredom and stagnation. But, unlike most other dystopian fantasy films, where characters are too often simply victims of an oppressive world, Boorman is more interested in the forces that cause such a precisely balanced utopia to crumble from within, as the citizens' own arrogance and intolerance destroy the once-noble dream of a perfect society. Leave it to Connery to help set things straight.

Don't get the idea that this is all doom and gloom though, because Boorman displays a razored humor throughout. At first, you'll find it difficult not to chuckle at Connery's kippur attire (red trunks, hip boots and a ponytail), and you will never buy into this ex-007 as a crude thug used for a public demonstration of penile erection. Meanwhile, Boorman has a field day turning God into a cheap charlatan, and letting loose with a juicy raspberry aimed at the entire notion of Utopia. Most importantly, this hallucinatory sci-fi bonbon delivers a dystopia at its most blatantly symbolic, by focusing on a dying community that can never actually die.

Two views of utopia or is it dystopia? RIGHT: Robert Duvall starred in George Lucas' first SF film, the moody, atmospheric THX 1138. BELOW: Don Johnson starred in the film version of Harlan Ellison's classic post-apocalyptic *A Boy and His Dog*.



olis, *The Time Machine*, *Brazil*, and even *Demolition Man*; films imagining the best and brightest future possible, as well as films that expose the malignancy that emerges when such ideals are corrupted. Almost invariably, the thinly disguised purpose of such films is to point out the inadequacies of our present-day society with a fable of the future, or of the lost and distant past.

Looking for one of the most bizarre visions ever put onto celluloid? Proceed directly to John Boorman's *Zardoz* (Fox Video), a film sure to baffle viewers expecting SF to be accompanied by whizzing spaceships and adorable





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Woody Allen showed he was no dummy when he deftly spoofed sci-fi in the 1973 film *Sleeper*.

**A Boy and his Dog** (First Run Features) takes a more direct approach to the post-apocalyptic utopia. Based on Harlan Ellison's story, the year is 2024, and the setting is the rubble of post-World War IV America, with a ragtag male survivor roaming the desert in search of food and females. With no budget to speak of, actor-turned-director L.Q. Jones (best known for supporting roles in sagebrush classics like *The Wild Bunch*) creates a future that's more believable than most studio spectacles.

Don Johnson stars as Vic, the 18-year-old rover, whose constant companion is his telepathic dog, Blood. But while Vic spends his time complaining about his lack of a woman and scavenging for pre-Armageddon canned food, it's Blood who is the brains of the pair, with a hilarious, running commentary on lust, survival, and man's folly. This isn't just a *Road Warrior* precursor though, because the plot shifts dramatically when Vic meets Suzanne Benton as an unscarred cutie in the middle of the filth and squalor, who teaches Vic the pleasures of consenting sex and lures him into her "Down Under" community. At this point the film takes a turn into social satire, when Vic abandons Blood and is led by his little head into Topeka, a twisted travesty of small-town America.

In this force-fed utopia, everyone dresses like they stepped out of Mayberry R.F.D., complete with farm overalls and barber shop quartets. To make sure that everyone looks happy (amid the arranged marriages, religious propaganda, and executions of anyone who doesn't conform), all citizens have their faces painted like happy, rouge-cheeked mimes. There's also the small problem that in this fourth-rate copy of rural paradise, all of the men are sterile—leaving Vic with the job of impregnating the female population.

Johnson is surprisingly effective in this very early role; Benton becomes a resourceful ingenue, and the unseen Tim McIntire deserves the highest praise for providing the

cynical voice of Blood. And although the above-ground chaos looks grim, the prognosis of this subterranean dystopia is more dire, since the misguided populace has been underground so long (and is obviously more than a bit inbred) that they no longer have a clear notion of the lost reality they're striving to reproduce—a situation that only leads to blind obedience of the law, survival at the expense of their compassion, and a glimpse at the darkest underbelly of Americana.

Years before becoming a pop culture icon with his *Star Wars* trilogy, George Lucas' directorial debut was a radically different science fiction tale entitled *THX 1138* (Warner Home Video), an expansion of his short film of the same name, made as a university class project. Combining themes from Orwell's novel *1984* and Ayn Rand's *Anthem*, this is no rollicking flight of fantasy, but instead, a stark look into a cruel, dehumanized future.

Robert Duvall stars in the title role as THX, a typical worker living in a society where conformity is the law. In this perfect, highly regulated world, everyone wears matching white jumpsuits, is shaved bald, and has lost their individuality in the pursuit of productivity. Meanwhile, the government watches over every movement, monitoring their eating habits, job, hobbies, et cetera. And don't even think about the opposite sex—in this sterile, perfect society, sexual activity is a crime, and babies are born in labs. In order to keep the population content with their empty lives, each home has a medicine cabinet that prescribes the proper drugs to keep them blissfully numb. Thanks to an accidental drug imbalance, the once law-abiding THX suddenly discovers love with his roommate, LUH 3417 (Maggie McOmie); is arrested by the blank-faced android police; is found "incurable," and ultimately escapes the repressive city. As usual, Duvall is fabulous as the glassy-eyed worker, and able support is provided by Donald Pleasence as Duvall's new roommate, who is forced on him when authorities get wind of THX's "sexual perversion."

This is no high-powered action pic, loaded with overwhelming special effects. Far from it. Instead, Lucas proves that, even straight out of film school, he had a strong visual eye. Sets and costumes are sucked dry of their colors, just as the characters have been sucked dry of their humanity. Although Lucas sneaks a few moments of dark absurdity into the mix (automated confession booths hand out government "approved" penance, such as "Work hard, increase production... and be happy"), essentially this is a bleak gem that works as powerfully a quarter-century later as it did in its initial release. *THX* gives us not only a glimpse into a possible utopia, but the resonant tale of a man who, for the first time, discovers his own soul, only to have his entire world shattered in the process.

If *THX*'s glimpse into the future is too chilly for your tastes, we move from the sub-

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time to the ridiculous with Woody Allen's *Sleeper* (CBS Fox Video). One of the best of his "early, funny movies," you can tell that scripters Marshall Brickman and Allen boned up on their sci-fi clichés before production; in fact, Allen asked Isaac Asimov to read the script and suggest changes — after reading it, Asimov declared it "perfect as it is." In the course of the film, Allen deftly spoofs all the requisite elements without belittling the genre.

The story begins on the same antiseptic footing as *THX*, in a government-controlled police state in the year 2173. But chaos erupts when renegade scientists defrost a cryogenic subject who has been wrapped in aluminum foil for the past two centuries, only to greet a middle-aged, balding, Greenwich Village health food store manager named Miles Monroe (who else but Woody?). Monroe awakens in the middle of a nightmarish future in which conventional drugs have been replaced by a handheld silver ball called "the Orb," where everyone is frigid, with sex simulated inside an Orgasmotron cubicle, and where the healthiest possible regimen, it turns out, is a steady stream of tobacco, cream pies, and deep fat. *Sleeper*, also, has *THX*-style computerized confession booths, but in this screwball scenario, they hand out Kewpie Dolls.

Unfortunately, Miles is soon branded a dangerous rebel by the American Federation, who plan on "simplifying" his brain to keep him from disrupting their docile society. During his misadventures in this Bumbling New World, he meets Diane Keaton as a whiny, terminally atrocious poet named Luna. And although at first she represents the perfect passive citizen who never realizes her Paradise is actually a repressive Police State, Luna eventually joins up with the unheroic Monroe in order to sabotage the government's top secret cloning of their assassinated leader. The plan? To kidnap the only chunk of the guy remaining: his disembodied nose.

Relying more on physical schtick than his later, more contemplative fare, this is Allen's most accessible film, loaded with rapid-fire banter between the stars, and unforgettable visual gags, such as Woody beating a man senseless with a giant strawberry, or battling a petulant blob of instant pudding. But in the end, amid all the belly laughs, it manages to say as much about the flaws of a "utopian" world as many more serious films of the time.

If you're in the mood for *unintentional* utopian laughs, look no further than the severely dated *Logan's Run* (MGM Home Video), a film that looks more deliciously wrongheaded with each passing year. A big-budgeted mess that purged the (moderately more entertaining) novel by William F. Nolan and George Clayton Johnson into a runny paste, while giving us a truly terrifying vision of the future. Try to imagine utopia as a giant shopping mall, populated by under-30-year-olds in cheap polyester, without a cold shiver going down your spine (of

course, following the sexist tradition of '60s *Star Trek*, the women wear nearly transparent mini-dresses).

The time is the 23rd century and, after all the usual planetary upheavals, survivors sealed themselves in squeaky-clean, domed cities, where all of their needs are fulfilled, allowing them to spend their days having random sex, shopping, and looking like extras from *Roller Boogie*. If that isn't bad enough, after one glimpse of their amazing indoor metropolis (a miniature city that looks like a *Godzilla* movie leftover), their futuristic weaponry (sparking pop guns), and high-tech transportation systems (would you believe, escalators?), you know you're in store for an overdose of campy chuckles, at the expense of everyone involved.

The only glitch in this tacky utopia is that once you reach the age of 30, you become a forced participant in an airborne spectacular known as Carousel, during which you're blown to smithereens in a shower of sparks. And since the brains of this world's citizens softened from neglect, few seem aware that they're simply committing suicide at the Mainframe's request. Unfortunately, the occasional Mensa candidate who decides to escape is tracked down and murdered by the Sandmen, Mainframe's enforcers. Long-in-the-tooth Michael York stars as Logan, a Sandman who only begins to question his society's power over life and death when his own existence is suddenly jeopardized. York's on-screen embarrassment is shared by often-disrobed Jenny Agutter as the film's requisite babe; Roscoe Lee Browne as a tin-plated robot named Box, which looks like a giant cheese grater; Farrah Fawcett as a dim-witted cosmetician; and numerous other actors who'd probably prefer not to be reminded of this career pothole. Short on logic, long on sledgehammer storytelling, this bloated dud proves how clueless some filmmakers can be in the attempt to create a halfway intelligent science fiction film.

If these movies have only whetted your appetite for even odder utopian delights, you can scour more esoteric video outlets for titles such as *Space is the Place* (Rhapsody Films) featuring Sun Ra and his Intergalactic Myth-Science Solar Arkestra, in a hallucinogenic blaxploitation/social commentary musical which has Sun Ra stepping out of a UFO and convincing urban brothers and sisters to leave Earth in order to colonize a new world where they'll be unshackled from Earth's prejudices. Or how about taking a bite of *The Apple* (Paragon Video)? This 1980, futuristic disco-fantasy from Israel takes us to the year 1994, where the entire population is kept tone deaf and docile by boogieing to a dance craze called "The Bim." This plastic paradise is destroyed by the sinister Mr. Boogaloo, in a Faustian tale of corrupted innocence and a single-minded ineptitude. Folks with a sense of humor that's more than a little offbeat will quickly declare this one a wretched favorite. □

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WHERE'D EVERYBODY GO?



## Continued from page 18

George Miller walked away from the development of Warner Brothers' Jody Foster vehicle *Contact*, citing "creative differences." Within two weeks, Robert Zemeckis agreed to take the helm, making the adaptation of Carl Sagan's novel his first picture since *Forrest Gump*. Jack Nicholson turned down the twin leads in Roman Polanski's *The Double*; John Travolta will star instead. Mel Gibson and Ralph Fiennes both passed

Actor Jeff Bridges will make his directorial debut with *The Giver*, adapted from Lynn

Eisner also expanded somewhat on previously announced plans for Disney's "Animal Kingdom" project in Florida. The park, opening in 1998, will be five times the size of the Magic Kingdom; the centerpiece will be a 14-story "Tree of Life." Eisner also hinted that Disney is planning another park in Anaheim, California. □

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*This season, a series of bold strokes has been made in an effort to win new viewers for DS9, including the presence of Lieutenant Worf (Michael Dorn, right), and Jadzia Dax's dilemma in the episode "Rejoined."*

S

TANDING TALL AND ASSURED AMONG THE command crew based at *Deep Space Nine*, Lieutenant Commander Jadzia Dax is easily distinguishable from her human colleagues by the trail of spots dotting her head and neck. As the ever-cool and collected, sharp-witted science officer,

Dax is a Trill; a joined species that comprises the host body of a young

woman named Jadzia, and the 300-year-old wormlike symbiont life form named Dax.

It's not always easy playing an alien with a collective memory that spans six lifetimes and both sexes, but Terry Farrell, who plays Dax, is up for the challenge. "I love to act," Farrell says. "It's so much fun trying to understand different people and getting to play them. The best thing about being an actress is having different careers. You feel like you vicariously live something. You get to play different kinds of people, so you feel like you get to experience more out of life."

The toughest thing about acting, says Farrell, is acquiring patience. "Patience with yourself to grow, patience to know that even if you don't work for three months, you have to have faith that if you've been working, you're eventually going to work again." She pauses. "I think the most challenging thing is to not let the business run your life, but to enjoy it, and just enjoy each moment as it happens, instead of anticipating what's going to happen."

It's not surprising to hear that Farrell, who's naturally effervescent and good-humored in conversation, likes to do something because it's fun and enjoyable. But that's not Farrell's only criterion, especially when it comes to her work. "I think that if I could have a goal," Farrell says thoughtfully, "it would be to work on quality projects. I'd like to do something that at least has the same integrity our show has. I really don't care what the medium is," continues Farrell, "because it's not like if you work on television, you can't work on features. There are more interesting parts for women on television, more so than there are on film, and if that means I'm going to work in television for the rest of my life, I would be totally fine with that."

Of course, though, that's not always the case, as Farrell readily admits about some of her earlier work. "Sometimes you have to pay the rent. I did *Red Sun Rising* — I didn't really need to do it, but sometimes you need to work for different reasons; I looked at it because I wanted to play the cop. I did a movie a long time ago called *Off the Mark* only because I needed to pay my rent."

An Iowa native, Farrell turned to acting after spending three years in New York as a teenaged model — a field that she quickly conquered. In those days, the Elite Agency, which represented Farrell, truly lived up to its name; Carol Alt, Kelly Emberg, Paulina Porizkova, and Kelly Lynch were stars of the agency at the same time as the 17-year-old Farrell, and all, including Farrell, made their feature debut in the 1983 fashion documentary *Portfolio*. "I started taking acting classes at that time. I read for a TV movie called *Paper Dolls*; I didn't get it, Alexandra Paul did." But when ABC later cast the series, Farrell was called for the role and made the move to L.A.

Farrell was undaunted by the prospect of making the jump from modeling to acting, particularly since the show was an "inside look" at the world of super-models — a world she knew quite well for her years. And Farrell feels that her modeling experience was itself a help in making the transition to acting. "In a way, being in front of the camera really helps a lot," she says of her modeling career. "You're not afraid of the camera. Your job every day is

*"I grew up with Star Trek," says former Elite model Terry Farrell, who went from playing at "Trek" to playing in Deep Space 9.*

BY MELISSA J. PERENSON

I'M  
JADZIA  
DAX



to look right into the lens. I think that makes you feel more comfortable with the crew and the whole way of life on the set."

In the years between *Paper Dolls* and *Deep Space Nine*, Farrell had guest-starring stints on such popular TV shows as *Quantum Leap*, *The Cosby Show*, and *Family Ties*, and roles in such features as the Rodney Dangerfield comedy *Back to School*. The year prior to the start of *Deep Space Nine* was a busy one for Farrell; six months after doing a failed pilot for a comedy series, she got the lead role in *Hellraiser III*, and then six months before *Deep Space Nine*, she did a pilot for an American adaptation of *Red Dwarf*. "It was kind of an ironic thing, all the sci-fi stuff that came my way that summer," recalls Farrell, "because I went for *Babylon 5*, too. But they offered me next to nothing to play the psychic, and I was like, man, you're not going to even help me pay my rent." She laughs. "So then a month later *Deep Space Nine* came up and I got it, and I was like, 'Oh, I'm so glad I didn't say yes to *Babylon 5*.'"

The last thing Farrell had expected in the summer of 1992 was to get a role on U.S. TV show *Deep Space Nine*. "My agents had tried to get me in, but they didn't," she recalls. "And they were down to the wire." She laughs at the irony of the circumstances. "I think they were scraping the bottom of the barrel when they brought me in; I auditioned for the role of Dax on a Friday afternoon after they called me that morning, and they started filming on the following Tuesday. I read for Rick Berman; they gave me one scene and it went great, probably because I didn't care so much and didn't think I was going to get it. I probably lost about five pounds over the weekend because I never thought in a million years that they'd bring me back. And

then they brought some girl in from New York, so I had to test the following week, and then I finally got the part."

Farrell had a good acquaintance with the mythos she was about to enter. "I'm American—I don't think you can be American and not be aware of the *Star Trek* legend. I grew up watching it, I was a fan. We used to play *Star Trek*. I would be the alien in distress, and this guy—Grant, I don't remember his last name—always played Captain Kirk. He was the shortest kid in school and he was blond, and I was the tallest girl in school, so it was kind of funny, and we'd play *Star Trek* in the backwoods." She chuckles at the memory. "Isn't that weird?"

*Star Trek: The Next Generation* was somewhat less familiar. "I didn't really watch *Next Generation* that much," admits Farrell, "but I watched it a couple of times because I knew people on it; I had already worked with Jonathan Frakes on *Paper Dolls*, I knew Marina Sirtis and Michael Dorn from a mutual friend; I met them two years before I got *Deep Space Nine*." To this day, Farrell remains good friends with Sirtis and Dorn.

Comparisons with *Next Generation* are inevitable, and Farrell knows it well. "I liked their show; it was such a fantastic show, really, that it's a compliment to be a part of that. I don't feel like we've filled their footsteps, but I think that we're a nice addition to the family. Their show was a bigger hit at this point when they were in the middle of their fourth season. Our show's doing well, but it's not the hit that *Next Generation* was. If we're lucky, it will be. It doesn't feel competitive, though," she quickly adds, "really, it doesn't."

When *The Next Generation* went off the air, there was a void left behind for *Deep Space Nine*'s cast that has yet to be filled. "We really missed them when they left, because we all went back and forth and said hi to each other all the time. We're not close to *Voyager* like we were to the *Next Generation* people, so I miss that camaraderie. It was kind of like two teams, you know—a 'you and me against the world' feeling. We were the *Star Trek* teams," she laughs, "the light and dark teams."

From Farrell's perspective, *Deep Space Nine* is a counterpoint to the cheery harmony of *The Next Generation*. "Well, as much as it could be the opposite without having to be so dark that you wouldn't want to watch it because it would be like watching evil," explains Farrell. "If people want to watch everything be perfect all the time, you wouldn't want to watch our show. The reason some people don't like our show is the same reason that other people like it. That it is different from *The Next Generation*."

"I'm glad that of all the *Star Treks*, I'm on *Deep Space Nine*. I find it more interesting. What I like about *Deep Space Nine* is that it feels a little bit more realistic, although I think we could be even more gritty. There's much more conflict going on between our characters, which I think makes the show a little easier to relate to. Not bad, horrible conflict, but just the normal human nature, 'you don't have to like everybody' kind of thing."

Farrell enjoys doing her own stunts when she can—"that's actually fun to do, and you can get your aggressions out," Farrell regrets having to avoid such activity earlier this season, due to a back injury she sustained in a car accident. "For a lot of the first shows, I didn't move a whole lot," she recalls, "because I could barely walk. I had a brace on my back, and I'd crawl to the set, and basically they'd just stand me there."

This season, the writers have really been pushing the envelope. "It's kind of nice how they've progressed as well, taking chances. Doing *Rejoined* was definitely huge," notes Farrell. "I kissed a woman and that really was a breakthrough, that they wrote it, produced it, and let it go on the air. That could have happened the first season, if they wanted to shock everybody, but I think that it was smart that they waited to do something like that until the characters were established."

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THE

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THE TRUTH

IS OUT THERE

DEEP

NINE





(Clockwise from top left) Commander Jolissa (Teri Hatcher), Terry Farrell, Commander Benjamin Sisko (left), Avery Brooks, and Doctor Julian Bashir (Siddiq El Fadil) LEFT: The former Elite model made a fetching appearance in this year's momentous season opener, "The Way of the Warrior."

Shooting *Rejoined* was, for Farrell, a very different experience. "I was excited because even though I would not look for this to do, I felt pretty fortunate that I had something so challenging to do as an actress. And to flirt with a woman is certainly, uh — I'm not attracted to women, so it was very difficult for me to do. I had to do a lot of homework on it, and think about how I felt about it emotionally, to try and give justice to the story. They could have told the story in a number of ways; they happened to choose to do it with another woman. But I thought that it was a really important story to get out there, and it made me feel good to be a part of it — to tell the story that you've got to love people for who they are inside, not for what's on the outside."

"At least that's what I said to motivate myself through it, so that the kiss didn't seem like some *huge* big deal. But it seemed like it was just natural and part of the story; and it would be odd if we hadn't kissed. I must say that it was really a strange experience. I felt so *weird*."

The emotional scope of the episode was a big step forward for Dax. "It was a chance for me to find out about my character and how she thinks and what's going on with her," says Farrell. "That she actually had an emotional dilemma, I mean, Dax has never had an emotional dilemma before really, except when they took her worm out, but that was about three-eighths of a page, it was, like, nothing, you know? This was a whole script."

Some critics have felt that *Deep Space Nine* lost its direction in its second and third seasons, and Farrell doesn't disagree; it was something she experienced directly with her character. "At this time last year, I had a talk with Ira Behr. And he said, 'Every year, there are a couple of characters who just get lost, and you and Quark kind of got lost this year.'"

"Maybe it was just that the producers were concentrating harder on *Voyager* than on our show. They were also worrying about *Generations* during our second season, and then our third season, it was *Voyager*'s first season. I think they buckled down and really paid attention to it this year, like 'We've got to do something about *Deep Space Nine* so it doesn't fall by the wayside.' I got that feeling, and, I think obviously, the executive producers did too. That's why we have *Worf*."

The addition of Michael Dorn's popular Klingon character from *The Next Generation* brought new, and yet familiar, blood aboard *Deep Space Nine*. But his arrival on the set was a personal boon for Farrell. "He's been my friend for a long time now, so for me it's great to work with a friend. Michael likes the setup, he's got a great attitude, and he's fun to work with. He likes to be really involved in the story, and he comes up with great ideas to try and make a scene better."

Farrell also credits the writers for recent improvements. "To me, this feels like the best season we've had yet, and hopefully season five will be even better. At this point we all know our characters, so they know we're all going to be our characters; it's just that we need the story to tell."

Although Dax keeps her schedule busy, Farrell found time to work



on an extensive multimedia project, the CD-ROM *Treasure Quest*. Farrell's interest in the project was initially stirred by the depth of her character in the script, a depth that is only revealed in multiple plays of the game itself. "I got to play ten different characters, and I had five monologues for each character. She's sort of the same person, but there are ten different aspects of her personality. I got the final script the night before it was finalized, so trying to learn it that fast was pretty interesting. It was a bit like flying by the seat of your pants."

*Treasure Quest* turned out not to be Farrell's first effort in multimedia. "Ironically," she recalls, "I recorded my voice for the *Deep Space Nine* CD-ROM the weekend I did *Treasure Quest*. So I was heavy on the show at that time, working every day, and then for two weekends in a row, I worked on the CD-ROMs; I was ready to, you know, check out mentally," she says, laughing. "It was so weird. I'm like, I'm Dax, I'm not. I'm Dax, I'm not. I'm an angel, I'm Norma Desmond. *Who am I-I-I-I?*"

Like all the stars in the multiple incarnations of the *Star Trek* franchise, Farrell has participated in the convention circuit. "I haven't really done that many," she explains somewhat apologetically, "because it's very hard not to have sleep. That's like a big thing for me, sleep, and if you say yes to something three months in advance, you don't know if you're going to be heavy in the show or not."

Even though she doesn't do that many conventions, Farrell does enjoy the opportunity to meet the fans. "Conventions are fun, because the fans are so supportive and they're so excited about it — it's such a special group of people who love this show." □



*There's no denying that The X-Files is more popular than ever; but, in some circles, fans are beginning to grumble ...*

# X-FILES

## A Mid-Life Crisis?

A CRITICAL ESSAY

BY STEVE BONARIO

**T**HE TWO BODIES ARE NAKED, wrapped in white sheets. He's lying on his back, a playful smile on his lips. She's curled up next to him, the lower curve of her breast exposed. It's not the jacket of a Jackie Collins novel — it's FBI investigators Fox Mulder and Dana Scully bed-spread across the cover of *Rolling Stone*.

X-Files, the millions of devoted U.S. viewers of Fox TV's hit *The X-Files*, are bound to be confused or excited or reeling from the implications. Is it a preview of coming attractions? Or the answer to a mid-season slump? Denial sets in: It's really some clever photo retouching, right? Then, realization: It's actually the cover of *Rolling Stone* — the Australian edition. Although the magazine itself has become a rare and highly prized collector's item, the image lingers, having been distributed worldwide via repeated postings on Usenet and the World Wide Web. And, while that may look like Mulder and Scully finally doing something about their high level of unresolved sexual tension, in truth it's just David Duchovny and Gillian Anderson — a pair of actors — having fun.

Although the cover will not appear on the U.S. edition of *Rolling Stone*, viewers and the industry might take the image as a sign that the show has peaked and needs a boost. It's late January as this is written, and *The X-Files* is barely thirteen episodes into its third season, a season littered with re-runs. Rumors are circulating on the Internet that David Duchovny may be leaving the show, and some fans are grumbling that the season feels 'off' — perhaps Chris Carter, the creative engine behind the white-hot series, is cooling down or burning out.

That the show is behind in production can't be denied. While the season opened with a string of new episodes, only one new show was scheduled for mid-December and just two for January. If there's a culprit behind the delay, though, it can't be attributed to one person or to any specific set of events. More likely, the nature of the show's arduous production requirements demand a few weeks of downtime in mid-season. The Sci-Fi Channel's *Masters of Fantasy* series recently delved into the show's production, citing a filming schedule of eight fifteen-hour days per episode, followed by three weeks of intensive post-production.

Any weekly television series requires time-consuming production, of course. But a drama like *The X-Files* has more in common with an hour-long movie than, say, *NYPD*

*Blue* or *ER*. With the exception of the leads, each story requires a new cast. The settings change from week to week, representing locations around the country, requiring that the staff scout new, unique locations within the Vancouver area where the series is filmed. New interior sets are required for all but a few well-established locations. Add computer-generated special effects and a fresh soundtrack for each episode, and you've got a large amount of work to squeeze through a small window of time.

Topping this off is self-admitted obsessive attention to detail of the man at the helm, Chris Carter. "I'm a quality-control freak," Carter confessed in the *MoF* interview. "I



want this show to be as good as it possibly can be." In the pursuit of quality, Carter eyes each stage of production, and no episode is sent to Fox for broadcast without his imprimatur.

In recent months, Carter has also been developing a new series for Fox, as part of a new contract that marries his talents to the studio through the year 2000 (which is the year in which the new series, *Millennium*, will be set). If Carter's attention is divided, the show's truest fans will certainly prefer a few re-runs to the production of episodes without Carter's careful policy of quality control.

*"If the future is written, then why bother to do anything?"*

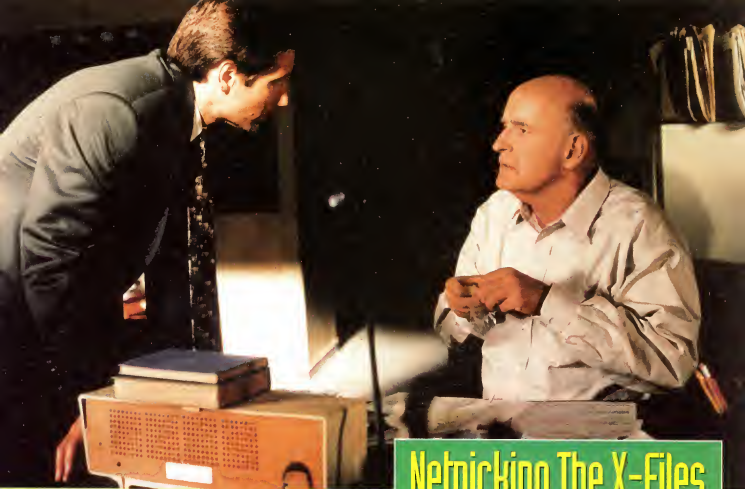
*"Now you're catching on."*

— Mulder and Clyde Bruckman in "Clyde Bruckman's Final Repose"

Up to this writing, the third season has been, by far, the most consistently well-written. Its



*Dana Scully (Gillian Anderson) and Fox Mulder (David Duchovny). RIGHT: Info highway paranoia strikes Scully and Mulder when a "chatroom" addict is killed in "2Shy." FAR RIGHT: What goes on here? Am I in some whacked-out alternate universe or what? Scully and Mulder do it.*



## Netpicking The X-Files

dramatic strength continues to lie in the carefully blended elements of mystery and horror, delivered with sincere emotional depth. In the outstanding episodes "Clyde Bruckman's Final Repose" and "Oubliette," each agent develops a sympathetic connection with someone who dies while helping them solve the case. The connection heightens the emotional impact while avoiding triteness or sentimentality.

For his turn as Clyde Bruckman, an affable life-insurance salesman who can foresee a person's death, veteran actor Peter Boyle deserves an Emmy. In an episode that could easily have been overwhelmed by the gore of eyeballs and entrails decorating each crime scene, Boyle's Bruckman shines bright enough to remind us that not everyone can bear the weight of seeing death as easily as Scully and Mulder seem to.

*"What do you possibly hope to find, Agent Mulder?"*

*"Why they killed my father, what happened to my sister, and what they did to Agent Scully."*

— Skinner and Mulder in "Paperclip"

When the agents aren't busy tracking down slime-mouthed serial killers, astral-projecting war veterans, or reincarnated death-row philosophers, the show returns to its base: Mulder's quest for the Truth. In "The Blessing Way," he even refers to the hacked files as the Holy Grail. Indeed, his quest forms *The X-Files'* principal story arc, linking episodes from the pilot to the most recent conspiracy revelations in "Nisei" and "731."

Mulder has been looking for the Truth and the third season has finally brought some concrete answers. The international conspiracy silenced Mulder's father because he wouldn't deny his participation in the government's questionable genetic experiments. (The experiments created humans who suffer from a leprosy disease, yet have the appearance of aliens as popularized by Whitley Strieber.) Mulder's sister, Samantha, may still be alive. She was taken, with his parents' consent, in order to ensure his father's cooperation. And Scully was abducted by a team of scientists headed by the Japanese counterpart to Joseph Mengele. Indications are she will be abducted

*X-FILES* CREATOR CHRIS CARTER KNOWS HIS AUDIENCE IS A discerning subset of the TV-watching public. His research staff pays careful attention to detail. While each episode may have a certain level of implausibility, most remain within the outskirts of possibility. This tactic distributes the weight of the show nicely, making it neither too heavy on special effects and gore, nor too stuffed with psycho-babble or scientific jargon.

When details do fall between the cracks, they are often caught by a group of detail-freaks on the Internet who call themselves "Netpickers." These folks share the show's slips online, pointing out everything from continuity problems and scientific inaccuracies to on-camera gaffes and plot holes. In the well-known episode "25hy," for example, a serial killer dissolves and eats the fatty tissues of his victims using a bile as goop as his romantic come-ons. But there is no explanation of how he also manages to dissolve and eat his first victim's clothing.

A convenient plot hole occurs in the season-opening episodes, "The Blessing Way" and "Paperclip." The object here is a data cassette containing a hacked download of the U.S. Defense Department's records on its UFO-related activities. While the hacker says he didn't use any precautions when hacking the files, and printed copies of the files are seen several times, Skinner later claims the data cassette was copy-protected and that he couldn't print any of the files. Perhaps the FBI can't afford a decent screen-capture utility. This plot hole allowed the sinister forces of the conspiracy to track down and kill the hacker, but later prevented Mulder and Scully from retaining a usable copy of the stolen data. □





LEFT, ABOVE: Mulder and psychic Clyde Bruckman (Peter Boyle) are twin targets for a savage killer in "Clyde Bruckman's Final Repose." LEFT, BELOW: Mitch Pileggi, X-Files' Skinner, also served as host of the Channel's special behind-the-scenes look at The X-Files. RIGHT, ABOVE: A rule of thumb: the less time Scully spends in the laboratory, the better the episode is. RIGHT, BELOW: In the second half of the "Nisei"/"731" two-parter, war crimes and alien experimentation are mingled as atrocities are committed in a leper colony.



again, and have a few more neck implants added to her present collection. Eventually, this thread seems likely to lead to a life-threatening climax — or cliffhanger.

*"I've heard the truth. Now what I want are answers."*

— Scully to Mulder in "Paperclip"

Carter and his writers are in a delicate situation, especially now that they have revealed certain elements of the conspiracy. It is international in scope, involves scientists transferred from Axis powers to the United States following WWII, and it may be holding Mulder's sister. Future episodes can't ignore the legacy of previous story lines or the show may lose the internal consistency necessary for viewers to suspend their disbelief.

The show's writers, like the conspiracy, play a cat-and-Mulder game. As with anything teased and stretched too often, the conspiracy story line may be in danger of wearing thin. How many times will Mulder come within a hair's breath of a critical piece of information, only to have it pulled out from under him at the last minute? How many times will Mulder's life be on the line, only to have a dubious ally, like Mr. X, come to his rescue? And how many more family members will Scully and Mulder lose before they turn in their badges and retire to Reticula?

*"With all due respect, sir, I think you overestimate your position in the chain of command."*

— Scully to Skinner in "The Blessing Way"

Scully's brothers aren't the only unseen men. Despite a strong presence in the season-opened episodes, the character of Walter Skinner (Mitch Pileggi) has scarcely been part of the third season. Perhaps it's just a case of fans not getting enough of him, but the feeling among some members of the Mitch Pileggi Estrogen Brigade is that FBI Assistant Director Skinner deserves more air time and a clearer role in the investigations of agents Scully and Mulder. The character certainly doesn't seem to show up unless a case involves government conspiracies or alien abductions, leading to the perception that most of the cases are, as Mulder has phrased it, "jerk-off assignments."

If Carter and his writers have more in mind for Skinner, they'll have to reveal what makes the buff and tanned assistant director tick. So far, he's known to be a Vietnam vet who struggles with the occasional war-guilt, but he has never done more than lend or withdraw support for Mulder and Scully when it served the story line. At times he appears to be a man with answers, knowing when to keep Mulder from crossing a dangerous line. But so far this season, he has appeared clueless, helpless, and spineless. In "Paperclip," he doesn't know why the data cassette is so important. When he keeps the cassette, he falls for a trap and loses it to the conspiracy's thugs.



In "Nisei," he leaves Mulder's butt hanging in the wind while he simply covers his own. This vacillation leaves viewers wanting the real scoop on Skinner.

*"Lots of files."*

*"Lots and lots of files."*

— Mulder and Scully in "Paperclip"

Despite the frequency of re-runs, a series this open-ended clearly has many more tales to tell. Despite the grumblings in some fan circles, the show has sustained its popularity, to the extent that Fox, which had been planning to release the first seasons to syndication, has reversed that decision, and will air *The X-Files* weeknights at 11 PM, abandoning their previous plans to develop a talk-show franchise.

Rumors of Duchovny's departure most likely stem from the fact that he has been signed to star in a major dramatic feature, Columbia's *Playing God*, as a doctor practicing medicine for the mob; but that film has been deliberately scheduled to shoot between *X-Files*' seasons — Duchovny has renewed his long-term contract with the show, and is reportedly in negotiations to co-star with Gillian Anderson in the *X-Files* feature, planned to shoot upon the completion of the series' fifth season. And if their respective Best Actor and Actress Golden Globe nominations are any indication, both Duchovny and Gillian Anderson will continue to smile from between the sheets of more magazine covers.

*With thanks to the Houston X-Philes.* □

# Bruce Boxleitner: SPACE COWBOY

IT'S FAIRLY EASY TO DISTINGUISH Bruce Boxleitner, actor, from his on-screen persona as John Sheridan, commander of the beleaguered stellar outpost *Babylon-5*. While the latter has his hands full with interstellar war, treachery within Earth's own ranks, and the nexus for both conflicts under his command, the former has just celebrated, on New Year's Day, the first anniversary of his marriage to actress Melissa Gilbert and, on October 6, the birth of their first child, Michael Garrett. Where Sheridan longs to be free of the politics and treachery of the *Babylon-5* station, Boxleitner considers his association with *B-5* to be a professional high point — though he acknowledges a certain show-biz stigma is still attached to syndicated drama. "I wouldn't trade the opportunity to work in this splendidly creative atmosphere," he says, "or with this particular mix of wonderfully

talented people, for anything."

But there are similarities between the two as well. The sense of "boy scout" honesty and straightforward enthusiasm that seem an intrinsic part of the fictional Sheridan are also evident in Boxleitner. Like Sheridan, Boxleitner is a "flyboy" — an enthusiastic pilot and earnest student of the history of flight. And, given that he is also an enthusiastic reader of science



*An adventure-prone actor's long and dusty trail stretches from Dodge City to Babylon-5.*

BY ROBERT MARTIN



*The "last best hope"  
for peace has failed.  
The name of this  
place is Babylon-5.*

fiction, the wonder is not that he has the lead role in *Babylon-5*, but rather, what could have delayed his full-scale entry into the genre after his small, but pivotal, role as the title character in Disney's *Tron* in 1982.

"It just never came my way before," says Boxleitner, who heretofore was primarily known for his work in the series *Scarecrow and Mrs. King*, and a long list of television miniseries, including many set in the old West.

"I'm not by birth, or by how I was raised, a cowboy kind of guy," Boxleitner says. "I was raised in a small town, and I spent a lot of time on my grandfather's farm, so I was around horses and cows and such, but I was by no means a cowboy. But I've always loved Western movies and television shows, and I've watched them all. And I always wanted to do them, so I was very lucky."

Luck took the form of a guest shot

on the long-lived series *Gunslinger* during its final season in 1975, shortly after the young actor arrived in Hollywood. "One of the producers on that show was a wonderful gentleman named John Mattley," Boxleitner recalls, "who later produced a show, *How the West was Won*, and he cast me as James Arness's outlaw nephew; that went on for about three years, and I got a good little reputation through that."

# SCI-FI ENTERTAINMENT

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"I grew up with Star Trek," says former *Elite* model Terry Farrell, who went from playing at "Trek" to playing in Deep Space 9.



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**The Cover:** Babylon 5's Bruce Boxleitner as Commander John Sheridan and Andrea Katsulis as G'Kar. See story beginning page 48.

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ABOVE: Boxleitner, as Commander Sheridan at left, predicts major surprises for the show's new season. RIGHT: In *Exogenesis*, Dr. Franklin (Richard Biggs) handled an unusual medical emergency in the "Down Below" section of the station.

It was not long afterward that Boxleitner created the character of Billy Montana in the ratings blockbuster *The Gambler* (1980), starring Kenny Rogers, heightening his visibility in the TV movie realm. Boxleitner's most recent telefilm appearances, in *The Gambler V* (his fifth repeat of the Billy Montana role) and in *Gunsmoke: One Man's Justice*, testify to Boxleitner's loyalty, and strongly suggest that the experience of working with this man is considered worthy of repetition.

It was, in part, Boxleitner's past work with its producers that brought Boxleitner aboard *Babylon-5*, the Fox series airing in the United States. "I knew some of the people," he says. "I had done a Western with Doug Netter and John Copeland, and they're great people to work with."

That Western was *Wild Times* (1980), a miniseries that still occasionally shows up on television, cut to feature length, and remarkable for its cast combining "Golden Age" Western veterans, including Ben Johnson, Pat Hingle, and Harry Carey, Jr., with the new breed represented by Sam Elliott and Boxleitner.

"But it was *Babylon-5* itself that drew me," Boxleitner continues. "I happened to come across the show one Sunday night, and thought, 'Hmm, what they're doing here is interesting.' And it sort of stuck with me.

"Some time later, I was speaking with Darla, who's been handling my fan club for years — back to the days of *Scarecrow* and *Mrs. King* — and doing a very fine job, I might add. Darla told me she'd been to a science fiction convention. And I said, 'what are those?'

"She explained what they are to me, and asked if I knew of this show called *Babylon-5*. I told her I had seen

a couple of shows and liked it, and she said, they were all talking at the convention about how the lead of the series is leaving, and everyone's wondering who the commander of this space station is going to be. She says, 'You should get your agent on that.' And I said, 'Well, thanks, Darla, but that really isn't how things are handled here. But thank you for the tip.'

"Then a couple of weeks later, I got a call, asking if I would have a meeting with Doug Netter, John Copeland, and Joe Straczynski — whom I'd never heard of — and I said, 'Well, yeah, can I see a script?'

The scripts sent to Boxleitner were the first three of the second season of *Babylon-5*. "What I loved about the show and the scripts was, of course, Joe's writing, and the fact that they were in a continuing saga, engaged in the creation of this sort of mythology. There was the sense of a very believable history that never really



happened. So that was a powerful draw to me.

"And there was also the fact that the show is shot in L.A. At this point in my life, I was tired of constantly running up to Canada, or to other states of the union, to shoot one or another miniseries, living out of hotels, at a time when I was deeply into a relationship with Melissa; one or the other of us was constantly visiting the other on location. Then, too, I have older sons from a former marriage who I was missing a lot. It is so rare, nowadays, for a series to be shot in Los Angeles, and it's getting rarer. So it seemed that this answered a lot of questions for me, particularly where my personal life was concerned.

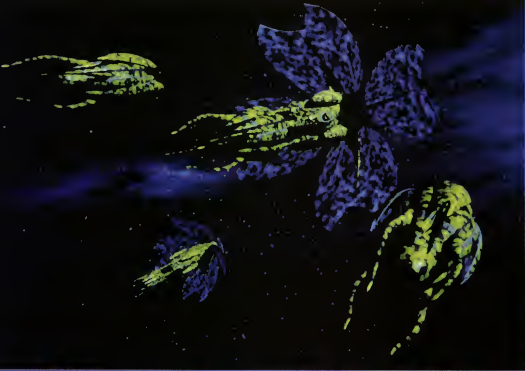
"And the last reason is, I wanted that role—I wanted to be the commander of a space station, to be the space cowboy. So I had the meeting with them, and it was wonderful—like old home week. They showed me

around the studio, and I was instantly sold. I said, 'Where do I sign?'"

As Joe Straczynski's five-year arc for the series unfolds, the cast of the show is, in some particulars, as ignorant of future developments in the ongoing saga as any viewer; and Boxleitner seems to enjoy the surprises in the narrative as much as the fans do. "One of the nicest surprises for me," he says, "is in the relationship between Sheridan and Delenn (Mira Furlan), and where those two characters are going. I was really surprised as I saw these two start getting closer and closer, in this almost childlike way. Sheridan

isn't developed too much in terms of personal relationships; I'm sure that's intentional—he's having to get close to somebody again now, after the loss of his wife. And I think audiences will be even more surprised as that develops. And the relationship between Sheridan and Kosh will develop more, as the Shadow War steps up more and more. As you know, Joe likes to turn things on their heads, he enjoys that. The remainder of this season is going to be quite exciting in that way."

At the time of our interview, Boxleit-



LEFT, ABOVE: The "living" ships of the *Vorlon*; a species that seems to have plans for Commander Sheridan—and for everyone else as well.

LEFT, BELOW: In the FX-laden episode "Voices of Authority," Ivanova (Claudia Christian, left) took center stage in her search for additional allies in the struggle.

ner had just begun studying the scripts for this season's momentous two-part episode, tentatively titled "War Without End," which will guest-star Michael O'Hare as Commander Sinclair, who filled Sheridan's post through the first season.

Boxleitner and O'Hare have never met, and the actor confesses to some nervousness about the on-set chemistry. "It's going to be strange," he admits. "Among the fans, there were some people who were quite upset that he left. But I guess that

we're on a much more equal footing now — I've actually done more time on the station now than he has.

"But I've heard nothing but good things about him. I've just started reading the scripts for those episodes, and I very much like the warm relationship between the two characters. It's an amazing pair of scripts, though I wonder how we're going to do it. They're two of the most complex scripts we've ever done.

"You may have noticed that, this season, Joe is writing *all* of the scripts. It's an amazing amount of work, but he is an amazing fellow. Joe has read a lot of the great science fiction and fantasy sagas over the years, and they've

greatly influenced his own approach.

"Last year, I said to him, 'You've got this whole rich tapestry of story worked out, with so many dimensions and so much depth to it. What was the germination of this? Where does this sort of thing come from?' He gave me a copy of *Lord of the Rings*, and he asked me to please read it over the hiatus. I did, and I started to see some parallels, and some very interesting things.

"I happened to remark on this in an interview, and Joe read it and said, 'My God, it sounds like I'm a plagiarist!' Well, no, I certainly didn't mean it that way. This was merely one example of the kind of literature that inspired Joe to do this, and he's read very widely in that field."

Boxleitner's own tastes in science fiction are in part inspired by the films that have particularly affected him; *2001* inspired him to read every work by Arthur C. Clarke, and he cites *Blade Runner* as inspiring him to seek out



the works of Philip K. Dick. "Right now," he says, "I'm reading Gene Wolfe's *Shadow of the Torturer*, the first half of his 'Book of the New Sun.' It's quite an interesting saga — though it's set hundreds of years into the future, it's almost a sword and sorcery story. The next book I'll be reading is John Varley's *Steel Beach*, which Joe strongly recommended to me, saying 'Read it! Read it! Read it!'"

Although few of the castmembers share Boxleitner's enthusiasm for SF ("which is fine"), he nevertheless believes that his interest and acquired understanding of the genre aids in his work within the series. It also helps him to appreciate Straczynski's unusual efforts to bring literary standards to bear on a work of televised SF. "And we also have Harlan Ellison, let's not forget him," Boxleitner points out. "He recently gave me a signed galley copy of his *City on the Edge of Forever* script, which is about to be

published. He's a wild character, but just look at the amount of work he's done. I was familiar with his work when I joined the show, but I had no idea that he was a veteran TV writer as well, writing detective shows, Westerns, and all of that."

*Babylon-5* is now at the midpoint of its five-year story line which, according to Straczynski, means two more seasons and it's done, regardless of ratings or following. It is Boxleitner's intuition that the show may enjoy its greatest popularity in the "afterlife" that will certainly follow. "We're already sold for 1998," he says, "when TNT will start showing the series. I believe that, by 2000, we'll have a bigger following than we do now, if only because TNT is on everywhere. There are times when we feel it would be nice if Warner Brothers would put themselves just a little bit more out there in support of the show. But we're on at such odd times in certain parts of

the country, it can't be a help to us.

"I understand that this kind of science fiction isn't everyone's meat; for the broad-based public, it's 'there's a guy with a rubber head — what is that all about?' But I do believe that if we were on every week at 8 o'clock it would be a completely different story."

While Straczynski has eliminated any hope for the continuance of *B-5* beyond 1998, he has allowed that a spin-off — an unrelated story that may share the *B-5* universe — is a possibility. Boxleitner indicates that, if such a spin-off does come to pass, he's quite open to the idea of participating. "But, while Joe has said that, he has also said that this is absolutely it — that this show is exactly what he wanted to do, and he has no desire to see any such continuance happen. We'll have to wait and see." □

*G'Kar (Andreas Katsulas, right) has a strange experience that may forever alter his relationship with Londo Mollari (Peter Jurasik) in the "Dust to Dust" episode.*



# Hercules and

Renaissance Pictures' revisionist take on legendary times puts a new face on fantasy in its most ancient form.

By CRAIG REID

SINCE ITS INTRODUCTION in January 1995, *Hercules: The Legendary Journeys* has been a consistent ratings winner in the United States, the crown jewel among Universal Television's outfit, and the sole unqualified TV success of Renaissance Pictures, the outfit behind television's *M.A.N.T.I.S.* and *American Gothic*, as well as the feature films *Dark*

*Warrior* and *Army of Darkness*. The show caught viewers' attention with a combination of pugilistic mayhem, sly humor, and the innovative use of the new generation of digital visual effects. All that, and especially the natural "good guy" appeal of Kevin Sorbo, have helped executive producers Sam Raimi and Robert Tapert breathe new life into the "sandal epic" genre, known to previous generations as a domain of overblown Hollywood epics, and bottom-line Italian movie moguls. And now, the show's success has spawned a spinoff series *Princess* stars Lucy Lawless as the title character, repeating her role from three well-received *Hercules* episodes of last year.

Tapert, whose partnership with Raimi extends back to their college days, comments on the birth of *Hercules*. "We were approached by Universal Studios to do some *Hercules* movies for their 'Action-Pak' series of television films; we wanted to do *Conan*, but the rights weren't available.

"So we watched the old Steve Reeves *Hercules* movies, and realized that we couldn't use that stilted dialogue and guys-in-togas. So we invented our own Golden Age mythology, with green pastures, no togas, and a conscious effort to modernize the dialogue — without making it 'hip.' We also didn't want to emphasize Hercules' feats of



# Xena:

A giant lizard, courtesy of Flat Earth, proves to be no match for Hercules (Kroin Sorbo). FAR LEFT: Hercules surrounded by an "army of darkness" in the episode "Vanishing Dead."



the legends continue...

strength. Musclebound guys are hard to relate to, so we opted for a more athletic, good-looking kind of guy, someone you felt you could talk to."

Sorbo definitely has an athlete's body — he's 6 foot 3 inches tall and weighs 215 fatless pounds — but he's unlikely to be mistaken for a world-class weightlifter. "People are so used to Steve Reeves or Lou Ferrigno, they think that Hercules must have huge muscles," Sorbo says, "but the show's producers didn't want to go that way. Critics originally didn't like that, they just didn't understand what the show was all about. Once they realized he is supposed to be more of a decathlete, they loved it. People can identify with Hercules and say, 'Hey, he's like me,' and, 'I wish I could be like him.' He's approachable, attainable, the kind of guy you can share a beer with."

Part of the show's charm relies on a rudimentary emulation of the wild and wooly Hong Kong cinema style of fight choreography. Tapert explains, "Hong Kong action has always impressed me, particularly Tsui

Hark's *Once Upon a Time in China*, Ching Siu Tung's *Swordsman*, and Ronny Yu's *Bride with White Hair*. We wanted to emulate them, but quickly found out that we couldn't incorporate a lot of the acrobatics, because it didn't fit Herc's character. He is the ultimate brawler and that precludes a lot of that."

Nevertheless, among the three trainers who helped prepare Sorbo for the role was fighting master Douglas Wong, who includes *Dragon: The Bruce Lee Story* among his credits. Wong put Sorbo through an accelerated version of his own "white lotus" martial arts training system, with the results of that training evident whenever Sorbo falls, rolls, or fights with sword or staff in the show's many action sequences. At the same time, Sorbo pursued similarly intense regimens in weightlifting and horseback riding.

Although his period of intensive preparation is well behind him, Sorbo still lives a high-action lifestyle. "It's very physically



demanding," he says. "I'm not a martial artist, but I do about 90 percent of my own stunts. In one fight, I was inside a temple on a scaffolding system and fought fifty double-sword-wielding guys. It was hard work, but I loved the fight — we did it in two days, and I'm quite proud of the results."

"I've seen the Hong Kong stuff, they're crazy — Rob and Sam are fans of those movies. I get hurt in *Hercules*, but in those films I'm sure people get injured. We have that style of action, our own tongue-in-cheek humor, and scripts with strong dramatic elements."

Upon the great success of *Hercules*, and after the rating non-performance of Action-Pak's subsequent *Vanishing Son* shows, Universal turned again to the Renaissance partnership, and Tapert proposed a spinoff show, based on a character from the *Hercules* series. Xena, a warrior woman who, after doing her best to put Herc's head on a pike, was abandoned by her army when she learned that, deep down inside, she was really a compassionate person. Although no longer fighting for territory and the spoils of war,



she remains a warrior, in defense of the defenseless and combatting the darkness of her barbaric times.

**A**T THE START, THE biggest problem was that the syndicators were leery about a female action show. Plus, they worried she would be a female "Hercules," says Tapert. "We did everything we could to make her different."

Again, Tapert took inspiration from Hong Kong films. "I have to give a great deal of credit to Bridget Lin. In some respects, we westernized her character from *Swordsman* and *Bride with White Hair* films. A volatile dark character, yet still very feminine; you never know what she's going to do next."

Lucy Lawless, a New Zealand native, brings a natural thirst for adventure to the role. At 17, she abandoned college in mid-studies in order to travel the world, grape-

picking on the Rhine and gold-mining deep in Australia's outback. She returned to Auckland, not yet 20, married, and mother to Daisy, now 7 years old. "Xena is as strong as any man or woman," Lawless says of her alter ego. "She's a bit dysfunctional, yet she understands the dark side of human nature. She's actually the person I could've been if I was born to different parents."

Lawless, too, was introduced to the "white lotus" system under the tutelage of Master Wong in preparation for her series. "Doing the fights is like doing a dance," she says. "They can be difficult, but when I see the results on the screen, well, it's really fabulous and quite rewarding."

Tapert adds, "With *Xena*, we stepped outside the boundaries of fight reality. In fact, when we pitched *Xena*, I made a demo reel of four Hong Kong movies, to show Universal the kind of action sequences we wanted to do in the show. Our rule in *Xena* is that you can't actually defy gravity, but we try to heighten the action beyond what most Americans have seen. Because she isn't a

ABOVE: From producer Tapert's "pet project," a digital homage to Harryhausen's finest moment. LEFT: Lucy Lawless as the princess from Amphipolis, the majestic Xena, in the "Prometheus" episode.





Xena learns that, in ancient Thessaly, "watch your back" was rule one. LEFT, BELOW: From "Cast a Giant Shadow"—digital prestidigitation, or clever use of perspective?



rate the Ray Harryhausen-style animation into the shows, when five years ago we couldn't have done that. They are really the unsung heroes."

Leading this troop of unsung heroes into the magical realm of visual imagination is the show's visual effects supervisor Ken O'Neill (*Dracula* and *Cliffhanger*), working with two veteran 3-D animators. Doug Beswick first learned the techniques in Art Cloak's *Gumby* studios, and has subsequently worked on scores of FX-laden features, including *Star Wars*; Kevin Kutchaver's credits include *Return of the Jedi* and *The Addams Family*.

"Although I've done FX work since 1985," says O'Neill, "our effects company, Flat Earth, has been around for one year. We are a garage-for visual effects that concentrates on 3-D creatures, like the stuff you see in *Jurassic Park* and *Jumanji*, yet we do it in a particularly cost-effective and timely manner. We generate up to 63 shots per episode of 3-D animation on a TV budget."

Until very recently, those who wanted to stay on the cutting edge of CGI technology had to maintain a staff of researchers and programmers, like the team at Lucasfilm that later evolved into Pixar Studios. But increasingly powerful "off-the-shelf" software has become available that allows film-oriented creators to make magic happen on the computer desktop. "We are what they call 'alpha' and 'beta' testers," says O'Neill, "the first or second users to receive software from companies that develop software for specific hardware platforms—sort of like a test pilot."

The earliest episodes of *Hercules* included a fair amount of location-based puppetry special effects, but the production has since gone over to the primary use of CGI for creature creation. And what creatures they are: giant snakes, pterodactyls, three-headed dogs, half-human snake demons, centaurs, assassins made of fire and water, two-headed

fanned-lizard serpents, bird women and, recently, eight (count 'em) sword-wielding skeletons. Not only do Sorbo and Lawless have their hands full, but so does O'Neill.

According to O'Neill, the creature creation process begins with a series of sketches submitted for approval, until the staff comes up with an agreed design for the creature. "Next, I have a sculpture made up of the creature—a three-foot sculpture of the whole body—and a separate, larger-scale head is made, with more details, for close-ups. The sculptures are painted and sent to a scanning house, which is a place that takes a 3-D, physical object like a creature head, and digitizes it into data, a computer model. We can then manipulate it in the computer. We'll take that scanned data and flatten it out like a bear rug, and place a skeleton inside, which can then be used to define the way we want the creature to move around."

**C**ERTAINLY THE BIGGEST challenge was a pet project of producer Tapert. "*Jason and the Argonauts* is my favorite mythological film," he says. "I directed a sort of 'revisited episode' from *Jason*, which of course features the famous skeleton fight. It's really cool."

Sorbo agrees that the episode, and that particular sequence, was quite a rush. "It was a dream episode. Even as a kid, this was a fantasy for me, watching those skeletons rising up out of the soil and then fighting Jason. I thought, 'Of all the six billion people in the world, I'm the only one fighting the skeletons!' This was definitely my favorite episode. We had seven fights in it, and this is by far the biggest action episode."

While you may have heard of shopping on the Internet, you certainly never heard of shopping for skeletons on the Internet—yet that is one way that Flat Earth managed to bring the sequence in economically, without compromise. A few discreet inquiries in the appropriate Usenet newsgroups located a fellow animator who had created a detailed digital skeleton for another project. "We bought that skeleton model," explains O'Neill, "and modified it to match the skeleton that we used in the practical photography."

O'Neill marshaled all available resources to face the challenge of creating a sequence that would stand up to the masterful Harryhausen original, a bar-none classic in the annals of cinema effects. "I went back and researched what they did on *Jason*," he recalls,

*Continued on page 70*

goddess, we can use more martial-artsy stuff, like a fighter running on top of people's heads, acrobatic flips, running up trees, fancier weaponry. It appeals to the *Hercules* audience, but the stories are geared to a slightly older audience."

Another highlight of both shows is the generous use of visual effects, including some work that is sharply reminiscent of Ray Harryhausen-style stop-motion work. "Technology has changed so much over the past few years," says Tapert. "In regard to desktop animation, it is now easier for us to go to CGI [computer-generated imaging] than to spend six or eight weeks building and working with models and prosthetics. Our FX guys are really on the cutting edge, working under incredible time constraints, yet they continue to excel, and deliver state-of-the-art effects on a TV schedule and a ridiculously low budget. They've allowed us to incorpo-

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When a scientist is murdered, lawyer Thurman Cutler (Leonard Nimoy, right) must defend a robot (Jake McKinnon) from the threat of disassembly in an adaptation of Eando Binder's "I, Robot."

RIGHT: A young girl has credibility problems when she claims her brother was abducted by the bogeyman (David Myrlea) in "Under The Bed."



**D**O NOT ATTEMPT TO adjust the horizontal," a voice tells you during the opening moments of *The Outer Limits*, an experience reborn after thirty years. "Do not attempt to adjust the vertical. We control the transmission. We control all that you see and hear ... " What they're telling you, according to executive producer Richard Lewis, is that for the next hour you are in their hands; and with that, comes a certain amount of responsibility; to entertain you, yes, but also to teach you, to startle you, to open your eyes to what's going on around you and, through that, to reveal what's going on inside you.

"We're trying to tell parables and morality tales about what happens if ...," says executive producer Richard Lewis who, along with Trilogy Entertainment partners Pen Desham and John Watson, are in control of the MGM/UA anthology series, now airing on Showtime in the United States and on the Sci-Fi Channel at 19:00 on Sundays in the United Kingdom. "What happens if you're not looking out for the other guy, and what happens if you become self-absorbed and are blinded by ambition. Not that we have all the answers and not that we're religious zealots or anything, but we have a sense of being honor-bound to help instruct people, to give them some guidance as to what's right

# THERE IS NOTHING WRONG WITH YOUR TELEVISION SET...

*A Close Encounter with Richard Lewis  
of TV's The Outer Limits.*

BY LISA MACCARILLO





The VR research of Jack Pierce (Josh Brolin) attracts the attention of the FBI and a greedy businessman in "Virtual Future." RIGHT: Michael Dorn, sans makeup at last, played Pete Claridge in "The Voyage Home," an episode that paid homage to John Campbell's classic story "Who Goes There?"

from things that humans have created or from within, whether it's AIDS or Ebola or overpopulation. People are afraid of what they're eating, what they're drinking, what they're breathing, and I think that that is an aspect that we're trying to tap into. There is also the fact that we're heading toward the year 2000, and at the turn of every century people traditionally are very unsure of what's out there. Even though it's an artificial date, it makes people nervous."

Lewis is not daunted by the inevitable comparisons to the original show. Rather, he feels that the new series has earned its audience by creating stories that stand on their own, a fact borne out by the show's stellar ratings both in its original Showtime broadcast and in syndication. "We started with just the title and the concept that we control all you see and hear, and thought that was a great way to go," he says. "So, we're now in our second season, and with the exception of one episode, *I, Robot*, with Leonard Nimoy (who played a different, younger character in the same piece for the original series), they're all original ideas. I think the original series, in its time, was extremely provocative, but if you look back at those original shows, some of them look a little bit corny. I'm sure thirty-five years from now, our shows will look corny."

"I am delighted by the critical acclaim that we've gotten. A fair amount of the press thinks it's better than the original, which rarely happens, and I think that comes from a very solid writing staff, wonderful talent in front of the camera, the whole crew, and the directors."

Lewis, Densham, and Watson, who make up Trilogy Entertainment, have formed a creative circle through their work in features, including such popular and acclaimed films as *Robin Hood: Prince of Thieves* and *Backdraft*. The 1994 summer hit *Blown Away* began Trilogy's association with MGM/UA and producer Frank Mancuso, which ultimately led to the *The Outer Limits* rebirth. Lewis's work as a producer of *Blown Away* also began his relationship with the film's star Jeff Bridges and his legendary showbiz family, which led to their collaboration on the series premiere. "The two hours that we did for 'The Sandkings' was based on a science fiction novella that a writer had given me years ago that really affected me," Lewis remembers. "It was set on another planet and it had a number of things that weren't quite working for me, so we tried to find a way to ground the story. Because we had a relationship with Jeff Bridges from *Blown Away*, we got to know Beau Bridges. Lloyd Bridges had also been in the movie, so we made it three generations of Bridges, and told a story about a father, a son, and a grandson and those interactions, which is really not science fiction at all. That was the core story. We then layered in the notion that on a Mars mission, they had brought

and wrong in a general sense, and to put characters into situations where the audience feels, if I was in this situation I'd be tempted too, but he shouldn't have done it, or she should have thought it through, and they've gone too far. I think that's why people watch these kinds of shows, and why science fiction is so popular right now. This genre, whether it's *The X-Files* or *The Outer Limits*, or whatever is out there in terms of big-screen movies — it's the same issue."

The attitude of the man in charge of *The Outer Limits* is reflected in the series itself, a show with themes that ring as true to today's audiences as the originals did to the TV viewers of the '60s. "Back then, everyone was afraid of the Russians," notes Lewis. "We had the big Red Scare, and it in many ways personified people's fear of the unknown — who's across the water, who's up in space — there was an alien in every episode and, my God, they're taking over our minds! They're taking over our world and they're around every corner. We're dealing with some of those issues but the dynamics have changed pretty dramatically. Most of the terrors now seem to come



back some soil — which has actually happened. But people hadn't really been paying attention, except for one guy, who had been working tirelessly for twenty years, and actually found something. There were these little eggs in the soil, and people ignored them, so he took them home into the garage and started working with them. That is the science fiction element of the story, but at its core is a morality tale about a family and how they relate to one another."

**L**EWIS FEELS THAT THE UNIVERSALITY OF THE TALES is what draws such A-list talent as Rae Dawn Chong, Mykelti Williamson ('Bubba' in *Forrest Gump*), Bruce Davison, William Hickey, Bill Sadler, Nancy Allen, Charles Martin Smith, and Marlee Matlin to participate in the series. "That's part of the reason that the studio gave us this material," Lewis notes. "A lot of feature people dabble in television, and they don't realize what a commitment it is. It's very time-consuming. In many ways it's chronically more demanding than a movie, because a movie starts and finishes and there's a lot more money to be utilized and a lot more time to spend it in. A television show is slam-bam every single week, which is very exhilarating, and very demanding. I think that they wanted us, if we could, to bring in some of the people we've worked with, people who have a lot of feature cachet, and yet probably haven't had the opportunity to do a more extreme story, a more intense tale, and something that moves them on a personal level."

A stand-out episode from the second season, called "The Conversion," employed the talents of Frank Whaley, John Savage, and Rebecca De Mornay, who chose to make her directorial debut with the project. "I wrote a story, called 'The Conversion,' and Brad Wright did a brilliant job of writing the script for it. I showed it to Rebecca De Mornay, and she was so excited about it she wanted to

direct it," Lewis recalls. "We were able to put together, with her help, a wonderful group of actors, Frank Whaley, John Savage, and herself. It was a very simple piece and I loved it. It was almost like turning *It's a Wonderful Life* upside down — what if your life wasn't so wonderful? What if you'd done a whole bunch of bad things and you had another chance: What would you do? And it was great fun working with all those actors. And, so, actors talk to each other, and now we just finished shooting an episode with Ally Sheedy for this season because she knew De Mornay. I think that's the fun of it. People are now becoming aware of us because we've gotten on in syndication. We're on our fourth or fifth episode now. Some kinds of success breed more work ... and hopefully more success. People have done *Tales From the Crypt*; these are hopefully a little bit more substantial, a little bit more cerebral. We can't rely on a lot of action to sell these things, nor do we want to. It's more in the performance."

Now finishing production on its second season, the second generation OL has taken on a life of its own. The show garnered seven CableAce Award nominations (the most of any dramatic series this year) and won the award for Directing a Dramatic Special or Series (Stuart Gillard for *The Sandkings*). Their ever-evolving site on the World Wide Web has become a popular haunt of the show's fans and net-surfers alike, and the show continues to attract talent based on the creative team's "mini-movie" approach to each episode of the series. "I'm thrilled with what we did last year," says Lewis. "I think out of the twenty episodes and the two-hour premiere, we had a dozen really rock-solid shows. I'm hoping we'll do even better this year."

"We did a show with Amanda Plummer, who is incredible. She'll probably be the first episode up, 'Stitch in Time,' I think we're calling it. She plays a research doctor who had a real trauma early in her life and has found an ability to go back in time to cor-

*Continued on page 71*

# Frewer to the Max...

BY CURT WELLS

*Although his cyberspace TV series made him a cult phenomenon, Matt Frewer's recent work has been in a wide variety of multifaceted "villain" roles.*



**V**irtual reality is virtually a second career for actor Matt Frewer. Having played the mid-'80s computer-generated character Max Headroom in several different TV productions — including the ABC television series that is currently enjoying a run on the Sci-Fi Channel on Saturdays at 10 PM ET and 2 AM ET.—

Frewer recently stepped into cyberspace once again, in *The Lawnmower Man 2*, taking over the role of Jobe, played by Jeff Fahey in the original. And again his virtual character was in the hands of writer-director Farhad Mann, who had also worked with

Frewer on the second pilot for the *Max Headroom* series, back in 1987.

"Farhad really wanted to treat the film as a blank canvas," says Frewer. "Once you've done the tip of the hat to the first *Lawnmower Man*, you were pretty much on your own to take flight with a whole new story, which is essentially what he did."

With his impeccable timing and keen sense of improvisation, Frewer was allowed to transform Jobe into a complex anti-hero, who plays upon the audience's sympathies by virtue of his own tragic transformation, from simpleton to genius back to simpleton again.

Unfortunately, some aspects of the film, dear to both Frewer and director Mann, were lost in the cutting-room, as Frewer's humorous ad-libs were excised from the final film. "Unfortunately a lot of the comedic stuff I

improvised in virtual reality was cut, because they decided to zero in on a younger market, and keep my character simply evil. The romantic aspect of the movie was also trimmed. In the film, Jobe, in his mind, falls in love with the nurse — which quite often happens with quadriplegics and paraplegics who have become dependent on their nurses physically, mentally, and then emotionally.

"It's an interesting aspect of the character because you see why he does what he does and why he turns his back on humanity. It was just one more springboard for the story, missing from the theatrical version. Hopefully you'll see that stuff survive in a director's cut release. The movie works well as it is, but now it's just less complex and more driven by good versus evil as opposed to understanding why Jobe is doing these evil things."

While the difference between the characters of Jobe and Max Headroom are certainly apparent, Frewer did find some similarities as well.

"In a way both are people who are trying to be good but who have a kind of a doppelganger, evil side," says Frewer. "That interests me a lot and certainly Farhad and I explored that to a certain extent on *Max Headroom*; and here as well, because we wanted to make sure audiences didn't know where their sympathies lay. One moment you're repulsed by him and the next you're attracted by him, and we made sure we were treating that line the whole time, and hopefully there's a lot of that stuff left in the final cut to





chart that progress. I also think this time you'll care about the people who go into virtual reality. I felt in the first movie you didn't care about the people, so when they went into virtual reality you weren't involved with their dilemma. I think this time you'll care and hopefully that will make the danger they get into much more exciting."

Reflecting back on his *Max Headroom* days, Frewer still considers what they did as ground-breaking even by today's standards.

"The show was certainly cutting edge and ahead of its time," says Frewer. "The stuff you can do is obviously far more advanced nowadays but today people still go 'Ooooooh, what a cutting-edge show,' which is the irony of it."

In preparation for the role, Frewer did extensive research on paraplegics and quadriplegics, visiting hospitals as well as read-

Frewer as Russell FRESH, the diabolical foe of a new breed of "X-Men" in the Fox telefilm (and possible series) *Generation X*. FAR LEFT: Do not adj-adj-adj-adj your set-t-t-t!! It's only Max Headroom...

BELOW: Frewer (seen here as Jobe) points out that the best of Lawn-mower Man II was left to the cutting room floor.

ing several books on the topic. Frewer also shaved his head for the part, a subject that prompts him to laugh; "I didn't have a long way to go, believe me." But he also notes how different people treat you when your head is shaved. "It's a very aggressive look, and I think it has to do with that 'National Front' skinhead thing—especially when you're wearing boots. It's as though you should have a swastika carved in your forehead. It has some power to it, in the way that Yul Brynner had power in *The King and I*. 'Bring me my harem!' Everybody should shave their head at least once."

"It seems to be coming back," he laughs. "I'm back to my four or five hairs. I can pretty much name each individual one now."

Most recently, Frewer was seen in the small-screen television film *Generation X*,



based on Marvel's *Gen-X* comic book (a spin-off of Marvel's long-lived *The Uncanny X-Men* series). Although rumors continue to fly about a possible *Richard Donner X-Men* feature happening "someday," *Generation X* is

*Continued on page 76*



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## MARCH-APRIL MOVIES AND SPECIALS ON THE SCI-FI CHANNEL

### SATURDAY, MARCH 2

9:00 a.m. Project A-KO\*  
(Letterboxed) 1992, Anime  
2:00 p.m. Earth vs. the  
Flying Saucers  
1956, Science Fiction, Hugh  
Marlowe, Joan Taylor  
4:00 p.m. Circuitry Man  
1990, Science Fiction,  
Jim Metzler  
8:00 p.m. The Terminator  
1984, Sci-Fi, Arnold  
Schwarzenegger  
12:00 a.m. The Terminator  
1984, Sci-Fi, Arnold  
Schwarzenegger  
3:00 a.m. Svengali  
1931, Supernatural, John  
Barrymore

### SUNDAY, MARCH 3

3:00 p.m. House 4  
1991, Horror, William Katt  
5:00 p.m. Critters 4  
1991, Science Fiction, Brad  
Dourif, Angela Basset  
9:00 p.m. Dracula (1931)  
1931, Classic, Bela Lugosi  
1:00 a.m. Dracula (1931)  
1931, Classic, Bela Lugosi

### MONDAY, MARCH 4

9:00 p.m. Frankenstein  
1931, Classic, Boris Karloff  
1:00 a.m. Frankenstein  
1931, Classic, Boris Karloff

### TUESDAY, MARCH 5

9:00 p.m. The Bride of  
Frankenstein  
1935, Classic, Boris Karloff  
1:00 a.m. The Bride of  
Frankenstein  
1935, Classic, Boris Karloff

### WEDNESDAY, MARCH 6

9:00 p.m. The Wolfman  
1941, Classic, Lon Chaney, Jr.  
1:00 a.m. The Wolfman  
1941, Classic, Lon Chaney, Jr.

### THURSDAY, MARCH 7

7:00 p.m. Ray Bradbury:  
An American Writer  
1996, Documentary  
9:00 p.m. Creature From the  
Black Lagoon  
1954, Classic, Richard Carlson  
11:00 p.m. Ray Bradbury:  
An American Writer  
1996, Documentary

1:00 a.m. Creature from the  
Black Lagoon  
1954, Classic, Richard Carlson

### SATURDAY, MARCH 9

9:00 a.m. Project A-KO vs  
Battle 1 & 2  
1994, Anime  
2:00 p.m. Twenty Million  
Miles to Earth  
1957, Science Fiction, William  
Hopper, Joan Taylor  
4:00 p.m. They Came From  
Beyond Space

1967, Science Fiction, Robert  
Hutton, Jennifer Jayne  
8:00 p.m. Remote Control  
1988, Science Fiction, Kevin  
Dillon, Deborah Goodrich  
10:00 p.m. Ray Bradbury:  
An American Writer  
1996, Documentary  
12:00 a.m. Remote Control  
1988, Science Fiction, Kevin  
Dillon, Deborah Goodrich  
2:00 a.m. Ray Bradbury:  
An American Writer  
1996, Documentary  
3:00 a.m. They Came From  
Beyond Space  
1967, Science Fiction, Robert  
Hutton, Jennifer Jayne

### SUNDAY, MARCH 10

3:00 p.m. Demon Trays  
1991, Horror, Tracy Scoggins  
5:00 p.m. Dollman vs.  
Demon Trays  
1993, Horror, Tim Thomerson  
8:00 p.m. Ray Bradbury:  
An American Writer  
1996, Documentary

12:00 a.m. Ray Bradbury:  
An American Writer  
1996, Documentary

### MONDAY, MARCH 11

1:30 p.m. Ray Bradbury:  
An American Writer  
1996, Documentary

### SATURDAY, MARCH 16

9:00 a.m. 8Man After  
1993, Science Fiction  
2:00 p.m. It Came From  
Beneath the Sea  
1955, Science Fiction, Kenneth  
Tobey, Faith Domergue  
4:00 p.m. Cat People  
1982, Horror, Nastassia Kinski  
8:00 p.m. Starquest

Suspense, Steven Bauer  
12:00 a.m. Starquest  
Suspense, Steven Bauer  
3:00 a.m. Gulliver's Travels  
1939, Animated, Lannie Ross

### SUNDAY, MARCH 17

3:00 p.m. The Blue Monkey  
1987, Science Fiction, Steve  
Railsback, Susan Anspach  
5:00 p.m. Starquest  
Suspense, Steven Bauer

### SATURDAY, MARCH 23

9:00 a.m. Robot Carnival  
1990, Science Fiction  
2:00 p.m. Pulse  
1988, Horror, Cliff DeYoung  
4:00 p.m. Starquest  
Suspense, Steven Bauer  
7:00 p.m. Beginning of the  
End Playhouse Part 1  
1996, Horror

11:00 p.m. Beginning of the  
End Playhouse Part 1

1996, Horror

3:00 a.m. 20,000 Leagues  
Under the Sea

1916, Silent, Allen Hollubair

### SUNDAY, MARCH 24

3:00 p.m. Silent Running  
1972, Science Fiction, Bruce  
Dern, Cliff Potts  
5:00 p.m. Iceman  
1983, Science Fiction, Timothy  
Hutton, John Lone  
7:00 p.m. Beginning of the  
End Playhouse Part II  
1996, Horror  
11:00 p.m. Beginning of the  
End Playhouse Part II  
1996, Horror

### TUESDAY, MARCH 26

7:30 p.m. The Making of  
Apollo 13  
1995, Documentary  
11:30 p.m. The Making of  
Apollo 13  
1995, Documentary

### WEDNESDAY, MARCH 27

8:00 p.m. Apollo 13:  
The Real Story  
1995, Documentary  
12:00 a.m. Apollo 13:  
1995, Documentary

### FRIDAY, MARCH 29

2:30 p.m. The Making of  
Apollo 13

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# MARCH-APRIL MOVIES AND SPECIALS ON THE SCI-FI CHANNEL

1995, Documentary

**SATURDAY, MARCH 30**

9:00 a.m. Lily C.A.T.

Anime

2:00 p.m. Night Night

1985, Horror, Chris Sarandon

4:00 p.m. Night Night 2

1988, Horror, Roddy

McDowall, William Ragsdale

8:00 p.m. Time Runner

1990, Science Fiction, Mark

Hamill, Rae Dawn Chong

12:00 a.m. Time Runner

1990, Science Fiction, Mark

Hamill, Rae Dawn Chong

3:00 p.m. The Evil Dead\*

1985, Horror, Bruce Campbell

**SUNDAY, MARCH 31**

12:00 p.m. Apollo 13:

The Real Story

1995, Documentary

3:00 p.m. Syngener

1990, Science Fiction, Starr

Andreiff, Mitchell Laurence

5:00 p.m. Time Runner

1990, Science Fiction, Mark

Hamill, Rae Dawn Chong

**MONDAY, APRIL 1**

9:00 p.m. SSSSSSSSS

1973, Science Fiction, Strother

Martin, Dirk Benedict

1:00 a.m. SSSSSSSSS

1973, Science Fiction, Strother

Martin, Dirk Benedict

**TUESDAY, APRIL 2**

9:00 p.m. The Alligator People

1959, Science Fiction, Beverly

Garland, Lon Chaney Jr.

1:00 a.m. The Alligator People

1959, Science Fiction, Beverly

Garland, Lon Chaney Jr.

**WEDNESDAY, APRIL 3**

9:00 p.m. Alligator

1980, Horror, Robert Forster

1:00 a.m. Alligator

1980, Horror, Robert Forster

**THURSDAY, APRIL 4**

9:00 p.m. Alligator 2: The

Mutation

1990, Horror, Joseph Bologna

1:00 a.m. Alligator 2: The

Mutation

1990, Horror, Joseph Bologna

**SATURDAY, APRIL 6**

9:00 a.m. The Venus Wars

1992, Animated

2:00 p.m. The Omegans

1968, Science Fiction, Keith

Larsen, Ingrid Pitt

4:00 p.m. Time Runner

1990, Science Fiction, Mark

Hamill, Rae Dawn Chong

8:00 p.m. The Funhouse

1981, Horror, Elizabeth

Berridge, Cooper Huckabee

12:00 a.m. The Funhouse

1981, Horror, Elizabeth

2:00 a.m. Dr. Jekyll and Mr.

Hyde

1920, Horror, John Barrymore

**SUNDAY, APRIL 7**

3:00 p.m. Star Wars

1977, Science Fiction, Mark

Hamill, Carrie Fisher

5:45 p.m. The Empire Strikes

Back

1980, Science Fiction, Mark

Hamill, Carrie Fisher

8:30 p.m. The Return of the

Jedi

1983, Science Fiction, Mark

Hamill, Carrie Fisher

11:30 p.m. From Star Wars to

Jedi: Making of a Saga

1983, Documentary

**SATURDAY, APRIL 13**

9:00 a.m. Cashman: Robot

Hunter\*

1990, Science Fiction

2:00 p.m. Project X

1967, Science Fiction,

Christopher George

4:00 p.m. Fantastic Voyage

1966, Science Fiction, Stephen

Boyd, Raquel Welch

8:00 p.m. Beginning of the End

1957, Science Fiction, Peter

Graves, Peggy Castle

**SUNDAY, APRIL 14**

3:00 p.m. Crash & Burn

1990, Science Fiction, Paul

Ganus, Megan Ward

**SATURDAY, APRIL 20**

9:00 a.m. Vampire Hunter D

1985, Anime

2:00 p.m. The Sender

1982, Horror, Kathryn Harrold

8:00 p.m. Children of the Corn

II: The Final Sacrifice

1993, Horror, Terence Knox

12:00 a.m. Children of the Corn

II: The Final Sacrifice

1993, Horror, Terence Knox

3:00 a.m. Seigfried

1924, Silent, Paul Richter

**SUNDAY, APRIL 21**

1:00 p.m. Zeram

1991, Science Fiction, Yuko

Moriyama, Yukihiko Hotaru

3:00 p.m. The Rejuvenator

1988, Science Fiction, Marcus

Powell, John MacKay

5:00 p.m. The Guyver

1991, Science Fiction, Mark

Hamill, Vivian Wu

**SATURDAY, APRIL 27**

9:00 a.m. Lensman

1990, Science Fiction

12:00 p.m. 1995 Virtual World

Cup

1995, Documentary, Joan

Severance, Rob Blackman

2:00 p.m. The 4-D Man

1959, Science Fiction, Robert

Lansing, Lee Meriwether

4:00 p.m. In Between

1992, Supernatural, Robert

Forster, Wings Hauser

8:00 p.m. Replikator

1994, Science Fiction, Ned

Beatty, Michael St. Gerard

12:00 a.m. Replikator

1994, Science Fiction, Ned

Beatty, Michael St. Gerard

3:00 a.m. The Golem

1920, Silent, Paul Wegener

**SUNDAY, APRIL 28**

2:00 p.m. 1995 Virtual World

Cup

1995, Documentary, Joan

Severance, Rob Blackman

3:00 p.m. Starquest: Beyond

the Rising Moon

1990, Science Fiction, Tracy

Davis, Hans Bachman

5:00 p.m. Replikator

1994, Science Fiction, Ned

Beatty, Michael St. Gerard

8:00 p.m. 1995 Virtual World

Cup

1995, Documentary, Joan

Severance, Rob Blackman

\*Parental discretion advised.

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ity newsroom, providing information delivered by a virtual reporter. Stories span futuristic issues about tomorrow's population and politics. It covers a world very different from our own, but resonates with much that is familiar to us today.

*FTL Newsfeed* airs Monday through Friday at 2:58 p.m., 7:29 p.m., and 11:29 p.m.; Saturday at 3:59 p.m. and 5:59 p.m.; Sunday at 11:59 a.m., 12:59 p.m., and 4:59 p.m.



# MARCH - APRIL U.S. PROGRAMMING SCHEDULE

## DAYTIME

TIME	Monday - Friday	Saturday	Sunday
6:00	Informational	Informational	Informational
6:30			
7:00	Animation Station: The Fantastic Voyage		
7:30	Terrahawks		
8:00	Back to the Future/Galaxy High		
8:30	Transformers/New Adven. of Giganter		
9:00	Lost in Space	Saturday Anime	Mad Scientists' Kids /Todays Envir.
9:30			The Anti-Gravity Room/Sci-Fi Buzz
10:00	Beauty and the Beast		Sci-Fi Buzz
10:30			C-Net Central
11:00	Dark Shadows	The Anti-Gravity Room	Inside Space/ The Web
11:30	Dark Shadows	Dracula: The Series	Mysteries, Magic, Mir/The Web
Noon	Sci-Fi Series Collection	My Secret Identity	Space: 1999
12:30		My Secret Identity	
1:00	Alfred Hitchcock Presents	Swamp Thing	Starman
1:30	Tales From the Darkside	Swamp Thing	
2:00	Night Gallery	Moonlight Matinee	U.F.O.
2:30	Ray Bradbury Theater		
3:00	Buck Rogers/Battlestar Galactica/Galactica 1980*		Moonlight Matinee
3:30			
4:00	The Incredible Hulk	Radiation Theater	
4:30			
5:00	The Bionic Woman		Radiation Theater
5:30			
6:00	The Six Million Dollar Man	TekWar	
6:30			

## EVENING

Time	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
7:00	Twilight Zone	Twilight Zone	Twilight Zone	Twilight Zone	Twilight Zone	Twilight Zone	Twilight Zone/Soup
7:30	Monsters	Monsters	Monsters	Monsters	C-Net Central	Monsters	Monsters/Trailer
8:00	Quantum Leap	Quantum Leap	Quantum Leap	Quantum Leap	Kolchak Nightstalker	Sci-Fi Feature	Amazing Stories
8:30						Film	Amazing Stories
9:00	SF Series Collect.**	SF Series Collect.**	SF Series Collect.**	SF Series Collect.**	Myst/Mag/Miracles		Alien Nation
9:30					Sci-Fi Buzz		
10:00	Friday 13th: Series	Friday 13th:Series	Friday 13th:Series	Friday 13th:Series	Anti-Gravity Room	Max Headroom	War of the Worlds
10:30					Inside Space		

## LATE NIGHT

Time	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
11:00	Twilight Zone	Twilight Zone	Twilight Zone	Twilight Zone	Twilight Zone	Twilight Zone	Twilight Zone
11:30	Monsters	Monsters	Monsters	Monsters	C-Net Central	Monsters	Monsters
Midnite	Quantum Leap	Quantum Leap	Quantum Leap	Quantum Leap	Kolchak Nightstalker	Sci-Fi Feature	Amazing Stories
12:30							Amazing Stories
1:00	SF Series Collect.**	SF Series Collect.**	SF Series Collect.**	SF Series Collect.**	Myst/Mag/Miracles		Alien Nation
1:30					Sci-fi Buzz		
2:00	Friday 13th:Series	Friday 13th:Series	Friday 13th:Series	Friday 13th:Series	Anti-Gravity Room	Max Headroom	War of the
2:30					Inside Space		Worlds
3:00	Informational	Informational	Informational	Thriller	Retro TV	Radiation Theater	Tales/Darkside
3:30							Paid Programming

All programming shown Eastern Standard Time. Please adapt for your local time zone. Titles in red denote original programming. All programming subject to change. This schedule is effective through 3/31/96. \*Buck Rogers, Battlestar Galactica, and Galactica 1980 are shown in rotation. \*\* Sci-Fi Movie airs one week per month. SF Series Collection title for March is Automan and for April Fantastic Journey and Future Cop. \*\*\*Working title.



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4. R2D2 - original 12 - Back figure (MOC) Card C-8 \$125
5. Chewbacca - original 12 - Back figure (MOC) Card C-8 \$185
6. Stormtrooper - original 12 - Back figure (MOC) Card C-7.5/8 \$185
7. Darth Vader - on Empire Strikes Back Card (MOC) \$65
8. Leia (Respin Dress) on Return/Jedi Card (MOC) \$75
9. Leia (Hoth Outfit) on Tri-Logo Card-C7 \$38
10. Yak Face-loose, complete + Mint \$125
11. Rebel Snowspeeder vehicle - Mint/unused in foreign box \$139
12. Sy Snootles + the Rebel Band - Mint/unused in Tri Logo box \$89
13. B-WING Fighter-Mint/unused in Tri Logo box \$149
14. European Ewok Combat set- Mint in box (Rare) - comes with Catapult + 4 figures \$275
15. STAR WARS - 1000 pc. puzzle from Holland - New 1 \$45
16. Kenner - CPIO Collector's Case - Mint in box-sealed \$75



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5. Classic Trek - original vinyl master Reels - Mint in the Package \$49
6. Classic Trek - 1960's Leaf Gum Card Set - Identical to U.S. - made for Dutch Market - final Sale! \$55 or 2 for \$79
7. STAR TREK - Topps 1976 original Card Set (Mint) with wrapper \$229
8. Next Generation - Set of 50 Cards (10 are D5-9) from Hostess. These were a premium set in 1993 in Canada - Rare \$149
9. STAR TREK: Motion Picture-Vulcan Shuttle model kit (sealed) \$65
10. Enterprise (Movie Style) die-cast by Ertl (4 1/2" long) (MOC) \$20

## X-Files

1. British Comic MANGA #4-\$40; #8-\$15 - call for others Available. (These are magazine size)
2. X-Files Trading card set by Topps-\$18
3. X-Files Promo Card Set by Topps - (7 cards) P-O to P-6=\$149
4. X-Files - uncut sheet of 6 chromium chase cards \$159
5. X-Files Card binder (with P-O) \$25
6. X-Files Postcard (UK) \$5
7. X-Files large Promo Card by Topps 5"x8"=\$20
8. X-Files 2nd Series promos- call for availability
9. X-Files - Book of the UNEXPLAINED - UK - (hdbk) \$75
10. X-Files - Set of 12 Postcards - call for availability
11. X-Files - Framed Pin (U.K.) \$25
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5. Thunderball - Spectre Sub Tank Model Kit (JAPAN) (MIB) \$30
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5. Terminator II - Endoskeleton Plastic model kit (Haleyon) \$29
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11. Nightmare Before X-MAS - Jack Skellington-glow in the dark- Bubble Bath Container (Figure) \$20
12. Battlestar Galactica - Talking stuffed Dagget \$135
13. Battlestar Galactica - Adama figure \$39
14. Twin Peaks - Access Guide to the Town (Book) \$15
15. Indiana Jones - Toht Figure (MOC) \$20 (other figures Available)
16. Thunderbirds - full box of Trading Cards (100 pcs) \$80
17. UFO - 1971 Annual - (hardback book) EX. \$79
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19. Batman - (The Movie) 1989 - Joker Laughing Ball (Mint in Package) \$14
20. Superman - model kit, 1978, (Monogram) (MIB) \$55



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# The ghosts of old ideas haunt my head.

**T**HE HARDEST PART OF EDITING THIS magazine is deciding what can be left out. And it's around the time that I'm finishing up the magazine that the ghosts of old ideas start haunting my head, demanding to be included in the editorial—inevitably, the last thing I put my hand to before bidding the issue a final farewell.

Then, too, there's always last-minute news that arrives on my desk. The momentous *Dr. Who* casting announcement squeaked in at our last moment, and we managed to shoe-horn that in. We didn't, however, find room to mention that New Line Cinema is bringing Isaac Asimov's "Foundation Trilogy" to the big screen; Dennis Feldman (*Real Men, Species*) is at work adapting *Foundation*, the first novel.

Also late in coming was news that Neil Patrick Harris ("Doogie Howser") has won the lead in *Starship Troopers*, the Robert Heinlein adaptation which Paul Verhoeven is scrambling to complete for a release at the end of this year. Phil Tippett, while rapidly expanding his effects shop, has been trying to keep his end of things under tight wraps; but Pixar animator Craig Good has seen Tippett's "bugs" (the spiderlike aliens at war with Earth in the book) and declares them "terrific."

I'm especially anxious to share news of this sort with you, because I think of this magazine's audience as being a bit more likely to read science fiction than the readers of some other SF media mags. We don't review SF novels in these pages because that's not our specialty. But, alone among the SF media mags, we are published by a company with a major commitment to SF as literature, via our sister magazines, *Science Fiction Age* and *Realms of Fantasy*.

I have always thought it a misfortune that, since the release of *Star Wars*, magazines like this one have fostered the idea that you don't have to read SF to be a fan of it. You can just watch the movies. While the writers for *SFE* and I often try to touch base with the literary roots of the media that we cover, this magazine is often just as guilty as the others for encouraging that idea.

Which brings up one of those "ghosts" I mentioned, a long unrealized intention to recommend to our readers a most valuable resource for SF readers, and to all lovers of literature. It's called The Gutenberg Project.

The Project started in 1971, when a gentleman named Michael Hart was given computer time, that was at the time worth \$100,000,000, on a mainframe computer at

the University of Illinois. Being grateful for the gift, and wondering what sort of "pay-back" he could deliver, it occurred to Hart that, in the future, there would be more and more people with computer access; and that computers would likely become many people's primary window on the world of culture. Hart initiated the Gutenberg Project which, with the assistance of volunteers world-wide, is aiming to make 10,000 books available in the form of electronic text ("e-text") by the year 2001.

Confined to works in the "public domain" (and therefore not protected by copyright), the Gutenberg files, at the end of the 1970s, included only a handful of American historical documents, including the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution, and the Gettysburg Address. The 1980s were consumed by the transfer to digital media of the Bible and Shakespeare's complete works. But in the 1990s, the Project has gained full steam; there are currently more than 400 different literary works available through the Project.

These include many of the acknowledged classics of literature and thought; Plato, Plotinus, Caesar, Hawthorne, Melville, and many more. But the Project has also included "light" literature, with special attention to myth, fantasy, and science fiction. Nearly 100 of their current works fit into these categories, including fantasy by Ambrose Bierce, James Branch Cabell, William Morris, Wilkie Collins, and L. Frank Baum. Science fiction is represented by a generous portion of the works of Jules Verne, H.G. Wells, and Edgar Rice Burroughs.

These are titles that will never go out of print; that can be lent to a friend and need never be returned. Young writers can learn from the masters through the Gutenberg library without expense, and if an illustrator wants to break into the business with a self-published illustrated edition of, for instance, Sax Rohmer's *The Insidious Dr. Fu Manchu*, the Project's liberal terms for reproduction of their editions make that far easier.

Most on-line services make the full Gutenberg library available to their users; on most, you can find it through the keyword or "go" command "Gutenberg." Via Internet, files can be retrieved by file transfer protocol through [uarchive.cso.uiuc.edu](http://uarchive.cso.uiuc.edu). More information on the history of the project, and how to help in their work, can be obtained from the Project Gutenberg site on the World-Wide Web, located at <http://jg.cso.uiuc.edu>.

— Ed Fixman

75663.2701@compuserve.com

# SCIFI ENTERTAINMENT

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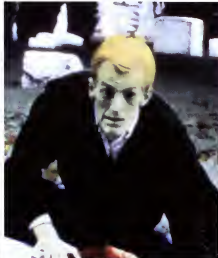
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## CHANNEL NEWS

Continued from page 12

Clause, "The Howling Man," "The Hunt,"  
"A Nice Place to Visit," and "Printer's Devil"  
will all air.

The Sci-Fi Channel in Europe has a variety  
of special planned for viewers in the United  
Kingdom, Ireland, Belgium, the Netherlands,  
Sweden, Finland, Norway, and Denmark. For



Night of the Living Dead is part of "Zombie  
Week" on the Sci-Fi Channel in Europe.

the week of March 4, Sci-Fi in Europe presents  
**Zombie Week**. From Monday, March 4  
through Friday, March 8, Sci-Fi in Europe will  
present zombie films at 24:00 and 02:00 each  
night. Featured movies include *Night of the  
Living Dead*, *Return to Horror High*, *The Dark*,  
*Helldate*, and *Revenge of the Zombies*. The week  
of March 18 is **Fright Week**. From Monday,  
March 18 through Friday, March 22, Sci-Fi in  
Europe will present some of science fiction's  
scariest movies at 24:00 and 02:00 each night.  
Titles include *Child's Play III*, *Alone in the Dark*,  
*Crucible of Terror*, *Tales from the Crypt*, and  
*American Werewolf in London*.

March 17 is Mother's Day in the United  
Kingdom and Ireland. In honor of "mummies"  
everywhere, Sci-Fi in Europe presents  
**Day of the Mummies: Bound and Gagged**,  
four classic mummy movies. *Mummy's Curse*  
airs at 15:00. *Mummy's Ghost* airs at 16:10.  
*Mummy's Tomb* airs at 17:15. Finally, *Mummy's  
Hand* airs at 18:20. Also in March, the Sci-Fi  
Channel in Europe will present a double fea-  
ture of *Back to the Future II* and *III*. *Back to the  
Future II* airs Tuesday, March 26 at 20:00, 24:00,  
and 02:00. *Back to the Future III* airs Wednes-  
day, March 27 at 19:55, 24:00, and 02:00.

For more programming information on the  
Sci-Fi Channel around the world,  
episode listings, and other cool science  
fiction information, check out *The Dominion*  
http://www.scifi.com.

\*Times of programs to be presented on the  
Sci-Fi Channel in the United States are listed  
ET. American viewers: please adjust for your  
local airtime. □

## HERCULES

Continued from page 58

"then sat down with Rob and explained what  
we could do. Earlier this year, we had *Hercules*  
fight a character made of fire. For that  
episode, I had a guy dressed in a green suit,  
and choreographed all the action with him  
and Kevin's stunt guy. We then filmed it with  
the green suit guy fighting Kevin, then had  
Kevin do the fight by himself.

"In this episode, for each of the eight skele-  
tons, I had guys wear numbered white T-  
shirts; we rehearsed the sequences until  
everyone had a feel for the choreography,  
then filmed it once with the T-shirt guys,  
then again, with Kevin fighting by himself.

"Once the material got back from location,  
I had the editors cut together two versions,  
one with the T-shirt guys, then one with  
Kevin fighting by himself that matched  
exactly, shot-for-shot. The animators then  
studied the T-shirt guys version and ani-  
mated the skeletons with reference to the  
action of the individual T-shirt guys.

The numbered T-shirts helped the editors  
to recognize the continuity from shot to shot,  
allowing the sequence to be edited smoothly  
and rapidly, and provided a template that  
could be followed in editing the shots of  
Sorbo fighting alone; and the animators were  
able to use the T-shirt version as a reference,  
tracking each animated character's move-  
ments and appropriate reactions to Sorbo  
and the set.

But the T-shirt version was a guide, not a  
straightjacket; the animators stretched out  
with some moves never performed by the  
human actors — or any human actors.  
"These skeletons are running around them-  
selves, throwing swords back and forth,"  
says O'Neill. "Each had its own quirks and  
character. Some of them have got these little  
brows that are shaded so they can have their  
own personality. And I talked Rob into doing  
a shot where, during the fight, one of the  
skeletons loses its sword. Instead of picking  
it up, it reaches down and breaks off a rib and  
uses it like a sword."

Tapert left us with his thoughts for the  
future of both legendary heroes. "I love the  
fights in *Xena*, but the *Hercules* fights are get-  
ting just a little bit dull, and too repetitive.  
It's hard with a guy who punches people to  
continue to come up with new brawls that  
are interesting without going into too much  
kung-fu. But we are continuing to try, still  
being careful not to use too many gadgets.

"For both shows, we'll start to raise a few  
stories from the Bible. We're going to break  
out of some of the ruts in *Hercules* that we  
are falling into. Lucy is becoming more com-  
fortable with *Xena* and becoming a much better  
actress. We plan to do a pure slapstick  
episode, and perhaps a few dark ones. So  
going light, then going real dark, we are  
expanding in all directions, and trying to  
give the audience an interesting mix." □

## OUTER LIMITS

Continued from page 63

rect it, and it really messes everything up. It's very intense, and it has less to do with science fiction and more to do with personal tragedy, and what the implications are when you try to unravel something that's happened before. As much as we all fantasize about it — 'if I could do it all over again ....' this shows what happens when you actually do it. And it's a very, very powerful story.

"We're doing one called 'Unnatural Selection' with Catherine Mary Stuart, and it's a very timely story about genetic engineering. What's happening now is almost science fiction, but what if you take it to the next step, and you're concerned you're going to have a child who perhaps can't compete with everybody else? You feel that yours is somehow inferior, and say you have the ability to enhance their genes, yet there's a possibility that in so doing you can create a bit of a monster — sometimes it doesn't work, and your child will get taken away. So, it's a real moral conundrum. But of course, it's *The Outer Limits*, so there has to be an alien quotient.

"We're doing another one based on personal experience. It's sort of a *Rear Window* with cell phones. A lot of us use cell phones all over the world, and if you've ever gotten cross talk, where you hear somebody else talking, it's pretty unnerving. But what if you heard somebody talking and threatening to eliminate someone and it sounded really strange? What if by the time you got home, that person was gone? It's on the news. They're dead. They've disappeared. I think that's an intense one. We have a whole slew of scenarios and we have some very, very exciting directors and exciting talent."

Lewis believes the show's success stems from the humanity hidden in the show's paranormal themes. But he's a skeptic at heart, so his role in the team 'controlling the horizontal and vertical' often requires him to take the view of those whose televisions are being messed with. "I think I represent a good portion of the audience in that, if you can convince me and make me a believer, then the story has succeeded. I drive these guys crazy, because sometimes I just go, 'I don't believe that,' or 'That guy looks stupid.' I think that that is sort of a testing ground. The guys who are running the show now, Scott Shepard, Jonathan Glassner, and Brad Wright, who are the writing staff, absolutely love the genre. They are also very skilled in it, and bring tremendous credibility to what we're doing. So, I think that's why it's a winning combination because we've got good people in place to do it, and then we take a reality check on it every day to make sure it doesn't get out of hand. I think we're filmmakers first and foremost, and what we're doing is storytelling. The science fiction is the icing on the cake." □

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## Year by year, an elegant new sci-fi encyclopedia traces this futuristic genre's colorful past.

BY LAWRENCE TUCKER

**L**IKE THE DESSERT TABLE at some madly extravagant banquet, John Clute's *Science Fiction: The Illustrated Encyclopedia* (New York: DK Publishing, 312 pages, \$39.95) is a true feast for the eyes. Brimming over with color on every page — authors' photos, movie stills, book covers, magazine art — and chock full of time lines, charts, sidebars, and other visual elements, this gorgeously designed book should have most SF

readers salivating. Whether it is also a feast for the brain is less certain, for the *Encyclopedia* is more an art-director's triumph than a writer's. Clute's text — thoughtful, earnest, occasionally awkward but often insightful — takes a decided second place to the arresting graphics.



British sci-fi television, including Gerry Anderson's *Stingray*, is included in John Clute's *The Illustrated Encyclopedia*. Classic "urban" horror stories are told in one-page comic form in *The Big Book of Urban Legends*, right.

The book invites browsing, page-flipping, a glance at the captions; but I doubt that many will want to read it with the same careful attention as, say, SF fans read Kingsley Amis' groundbreaking *New Maps of Hell* 35 years ago.

One thing that discourages reading is the book's peculiar organization, which seems the product of a design conference rather than the structure a scholar might have preferred. The opening chapter presents a series of brief theme essays — "The Atomic Age," "Flying Saucers," "Life in Space" — each linked, somewhat arbitrarily, to a separate decade ("The 1910s: Aerial Empires"; "The 1920s: Mass Transport"). Chapter Two takes us through the decades once again, this time with a series of precise-looking charts that set various "SF Events" against each year's "World Events" (1932: "Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* is published ...; Hitler is defeated in the

presidential elections, but holds a majority in the Reichstag") and with further decade-linked theme essays ("Time Travel"; "Robots, Androids, and Cyborgs") that, like the previous chapter's, seem little more than hooks to hang the pictures on. The next chapter, "Influential Magazines," takes us back through the century still again with a gallery of pulp-magazine covers and, below each one, a few lines of historical comment. Clute himself is English, and in these pages the colorful covers of American pulps such as *Weird Tales* and *Amazing Stories* share space with less familiar British titles such as *Scoops* and *Tales of Wonder*. As a lifelong pulp fan, I can never get enough of cover art like this; but since many of the titles have already been mentioned in the previous chapter (which carefully lists each year's notable magazines), to present them again in a chapter of their own seems strangely repetitive.

The largest chapter of the book is devoted to "Major Authors," and once again we're back to year-by-year time lines and a not-very-useful grouping of writers into historical categories, so that, for reasons mysterious to me, Robert A. Heinlein appears in the same section as George Orwell ("Authors of the Early 20th Century"), Eric Frank Russell — born before Heinlein — appears in the next section ("Authors of the 1950s"), and Clifford Simak — born before him — appears in the next ("Authors of the 1960s"). Still, this is the chapter where Clute's erudition shines: If he hasn't read every SF book published in the Western world in the past hundred years, he certainly gives a fair impression that he's at least acquainted with them all, and — no easy task — he manages to voice informed and provocative opinions about dozens and dozens of writers, continental European as well as British and American, along with comprehensive bibliographies.

Like an editor prefacing the stories in an anthology with affectionate individual introductions — or, if you prefer, like a track coach handing out varsity letters — Clute finds complimentary things to say about each author he includes. On John Crowley: "He is one of the finest writers of English prose active in SF or fantasy." On George R. R. Martin: "He makes it all look easy." On Frederik Pohl: "It is impossible not to praise Pohl for everything he has accom-







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plished." On Philip K. Dick: "[He] was one of the two or three genuinely great writers born and bred in the world of SF." Of Paul Anderson: "There is no other SF author who has produced as much high-quality work, with such variety, and with such continued verve."

But his judgments are more than mere encomia; he is frequently very good at capturing an author's unique appeal — or, at times, his or her particular failing. Of Ray Bradbury, for example, he observes: "Much of his work looks backward, and ... the overwhelming emotional force of his best stories turns, in less inspired tales, to cloying nostalgia." Of Robert Heinlein: "He had the capacity to make the wildest, or the most personal, or visions sound like common sense, like the kind of sage but enticing advice that an adolescent might dream of receiving from an adventurous uncle who had traveled a lot. The uncle with a mysterious job in government ... ." And he goes on to analyze, with insight and sympathy, why Heinlein's later work grew so crankish and unpleasant.

The next chapter focuses on SF's classic books, again listed by historical era. Typifying the *Encyclopedia's* emphasis on graphics over words is the fact that each book's cover is lovingly reproduced in full color, the pictures taking up considerably more space than Clute's brief comments.

Clute devotes a mere four pages to American TV (including a vague and surprisingly inadequate sidebar on *The Twilight Zone*). Still, he offers, on the subject, just the sort of perceptive observation that may come more easily to an outsider:

In the early years, television in America tended to emphasize the sponsored series, in direct contrast to British television, which tended to go for either one-of-a-kind dramas or serials. And when we remember that SF purports to explore change, which implies both beginnings and endings, it comes clear that there is a problem here. Perhaps we can now explain why so many American SF stories on television seem to go, boldly or otherwise, into the unknown, but only until the half-time commercial break. After which point, they spend the second half returning things to the status quo ante — ready to start all over again, exactly where they began, when the next episode comes around. The remainder of the volume is taken up with SF illustrators, comics, and films. Clute lists hundreds of the latter, year by year, along with capsule critiques. *Sci-Fi Entertainment* readers may spot a few errors in Clute's plot descriptions, and will surely quibble with some of his judgments, which are, as you might expect, about as valuable and interesting as any reasonably intelligent movie-loving friend might contribute — but no more so.

*The Big Book of Urban Legends* by Robert Loren Fleming and Robert F. Boyd, Jr. (New York: Paradox Press, 223 pages, \$12.95 pb)

I'm convinced that, for anyone except a die-hard comic hater, *Urban Legends* is one of the most irresistible, compulsively readable, and consistently amusing books of the past year. *Urban Legends* recounts some 200 individual stories, each of them just one page long. And each is, happily, illustrated by a different artist, turning the book into a showcase of cartoon styles, from elegant to crude, from mild to precise.

The book's authors have adapted their material from the modern-day legends collected by University of Utah folklore specialist Jan Harold Brunvand, author of books such as *The Mexican Pet* (which proves to be, as the comic-strip version reveals, "a Mexican sewer rat"), *The Choking Doberman* (who's bitten off two fingers of a would-be burglar), and *The Vanishing Hitchhiker* (who, as you might have guessed, turns out to be a ghost).

You've probably heard many of these stories yourself; indeed, you've probably recounted a few, whether or not you realized that the tale was the stuff of legend. They're the stories that, as Brunvand says in his introduction, are "always said to have happened to a friend of a friend." Some are traditional campfire tales such as "The Hook" (You remember; it's the one about the prosthetic hand of a homicidal maniac, and it ends up dangling from the door handle of a car that had been parked on Lover's Lane.). Others — such as the one about the Yukon trapper who kills his beloved dog because he thinks it's eaten his baby, later discovering that the loyal animal has in fact saved the child from a wolf — are incalculably ancient.

Paradox Press, an imprint of DC Comics, has published other "Big Books" — there's one on Death, one on Conspiracies, one on Weiridos — and there are more to come; but no material seems so ideally suited to the comic-book format as these wonderfully memorable little tales.

*The Nitpicker's Guide for Next Generation Trekkers, Volume II* by Phil Farrand (New York: Dell, 368 pp, \$12.95 pb).

Fans of the first *Nitpicker's Guide* — and surely there must be a few among *Sci-Fi Entertainment* readers — now have more mind-boggling trivia to ponder and to stump their friends with: Trivia such as the "number of times we see Picard buck naked" (one) and the "vintage of the champagne that christens the *Enterprise*" (Star Date 2265). Farrand, clearly an obsessive, provides insanely tough questions ("How far is it from Earth to Malcor III?") and maddeningly picky plot bloopers ("When La Forge falls in the pit, his visor clearly lands off to his right. However, a few moments later he picks it up by reaching to his left") for each episode of the series.

For hard core Trekkers, a book like this ought to be sheer catnip. Others, however, may be reminded of what William Shatner said to a roomful of worshipful fans in that long-ago *Saturday Night Live* sketch: "Get a life!" □

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**MONEY BACK GUARANTEE**

**FREWER**

Continued from page 65

under consideration as a possible series this year. The pilot episode, written by co-executive producer Eric Blakeney, was directed by Jack Sholder, whose credits include *The Hidden*, and a previous well-received Fox SF television, *12.01*.

"It was a lot of fun to do," says Frewer. "I play the big baddie in it, Russell Tresh. He's an advertising man, a sort of Madison Avenue type who invents a machine to go into people's heads and insert subliminal messages about his products into their minds. Then he confronts the X-Men mutants and finds that mutants can do that without the use of a machine, so he wants to do brain surgery on them and grab a cell or two from the pineal region of their brain, so he can do the same thing without the need of a machine as well. He's a wonderfully maniacal character, and he was fun to play — the character isn't in any of the comic books so it was a blank canvas for me to do what I wanted."

Moving between both film and TV has been a natural, according to Frewer, though he's observed that fans treat you differently with each medium. "When people recognize you for a movie you've done, they're more standoffish because it's sort of a larger-than-life image they see," he says. "If you get recognized for a TV thing it's usually like 'Hey Matt, come on over,' because they've invited you into their living room on TV, so there's familiarity right off that bat."

Although classically trained as an actor in England for over eleven years, Frewer is perhaps best known as a comedic performer following his stint on such sitcoms as *Doctor, Doctor* and *Shaky Ground*, as well as a winning turn in Disney's *Honey I Shrunk the Kids*.

"Comedy has always been a part of me," says Frewer. "Over in England, though, I was known mainly for my dramatic work. Once I came over to the States and started doing characters like Max Headroom and sitcoms like *Doctor, Doctor*, all of a sudden I'm 'the funny guy.' So it's important to keep people guessing and one step ahead of where they want to pigeonhole you."

Frewer's high visibility in the past year or so began with a role quite unlike any he'd played before, as the violently unstable Donald "Trashcan Man" Elbert in the successful ABC end-of-the-world miniseries Stephen King's *The Stand*, and this past winter he also starred as General Alexander Haig in the TNT cable premiere movie *Kissinger* and *Nixon*.

"I think the way you're afforded opportunities is to turn down money and turn down roles that might reinforce getting those type of roles again," says Frewer. "It's difficult to stand back, particularly if you haven't worked in a while; but to me the idea is that when you're on your deathbed you can look back over your career and say, 'I did some interesting, fulfilling things.'"

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# Kolchak balances horror and humor.

**I** don't believe it. I'm a cop. I work with facts. Now I have to start looking for something that saps the life out of a man like juice out of an orange."

Cy Chermak, producer of the *Kolchak* television series, wrote that line for the 1959 low-budget feature, *The 4-D Man*, 15 years before Carl Kolchak first stalked the nightstreets of urban America. While Chermak has never been considered the show's creative guiding light, the coincidence of circumstance and attitude seems not entirely accidental. Nor does it strike anyone as coincidental that, 15 years later, an FBI agent named Fox Mulder acts out the same conflict of cynicism and belief.

*Kolchak*, of course, was a little classier than that poverty-row picture, just as *The X-Files* is another step up the evolutionary ladder from *Kolchak*. Like *The X-Files*, not every *Kolchak* episode was a winner; but even the weakest episode held the fans, thanks to Darren McGavin's charismatic portrayal of a down-at-the-heels reporter who has foregone success in order to pursue the Truth (which must certainly be "out there").

*Kolchak* was the brainchild of Jeff Rice, whose novel, *The Kolchak Tapes*, pit the fierce reporter against a vampire thriving in Las Vegas. Adapted for television by fantasy writer Richard Matheson, it became *The Night Stalker*, one of the top-rated TV movies of 1971. The 1973 follow-up *The Night Strangler*—written by Matheson, and directed by *Dark Shadows* maestro Dan Curtis—made an equal splash.

In 1974, the series *Kolchak* debuted. The series was scaled down in budget from the telefilms; the directors chosen to carry the series forward were a rag-tag bunch; Bruce Kessler's career had begun in the late '60s with films like *Angels From Hell* and *The Gay Decade*; Vincent McEveety is best known for a series of "second-tier" Disney productions, including *The Apple Dumpling Gang*; Gordon Hessler, after directing an episode for the original *Star Trek*, had directed *Cry of the Banshee* and *The Golden Voyage of Sinbad*.

Other than Hammer films veteran Jimmy Sangster, who wrote the "Horror in the Heights" episode, the writers on the show were mostly undistinguished—episodes were often a great deal of fun, and occasionally abysmal. But there was something about Carl Kolchak that made every show worth seeing, as Darren McGavin, shared his affec-



Darren McGavin portrayed a down-at-the-heels reporter pursuing the Truth; a rational man faced with the inconceivable.

tion for Carl Kolchak with the viewers. "This guy, I've got him in my mind, see," he said in an interview at the time. "He's fired from the *New York Journal* in 1955. That day, the day he was fired, he was wearing a seersucker suit, a black string tie and a white shirt with a button-down collar. So, he's still wearing 'em. He hasn't bought a suit of clothes since he was fired .... The truth of the matter is I love Kolchak. He's terrific. What he's saying to the world is beautiful; the heck with you, brother, I'll get my story anyway."

Ensuring the "purity" of *Kolchak* in each script was the job of David Chase, whose start came with the adaptation of his novel *Still Life* as a film, *Grave of the Vampire*, in 1971. Today, Chase is a top producer-writer, credited for *The Rockford Files*, *Northern Exposure*, and *I'll Fly Away*. Looking back to the *Kolchak* days, Chase recalls some combat with networks and producers. "The arguments were over the type of humor being used," Chase recalls. "It's funny—looking at those episodes now, it's impossible to figure what the fuss was about. But I worked hard to keep the humor from becoming too cute or silly. I tried to give it a bit of an edge."

In 1979, I wrote a piece on the *Kolchak* series that Stephen King cited in his non-fiction work *Danse Macabre*. While praising my research, King questioned my taste. "*Kolchak* was awful," King said. Well, it isn't my place to argue with the director of *Maximum Overdrive*. But, with all its faults, I tend to credit what Cy Chermak told me when I interviewed him back then. "I still hear from fans every day," Cy declared, "especially from younger kids and the college crowd, and after only one season! I think that if that show had gone on, it would have been as big as *Star Trek*." □

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Dear SFE,

Thank you for another grand issue! And one that includes some of my personal favorites, including writer Dan "Alien" O'Bannon and *Max Headroom* (tell the Channel to schedule another Maxathon soon).

Another cultist taste of mine is *Highlander*, the film and the series; I was thrilled to read that Miramax will be releasing a fourth film. While on that topic, may I note that you haven't as yet done a great deal on that? Yes, I do recall the Christopher Lambert interview, and yours was the first magazine with *Highlander 3* news; but how about an all-encompassing piece on the entire saga?

Nancy Lum  
Portland, OR

We'll take your suggestions into consideration. Meanwhile, we should mention that the working title for the new film is *Highlander: The Immortals*, and it is said to concern the adventures of a new, younger member of the long-lived Scottish breed.

Dear Editor,

I have been a subscriber to *Sci-Fi Entertainment* since the very first issue. Until the last issue, I found your magazine to be enjoyable and informative (if not particularly so, with the *Star Trek* universe). However, you have surpassed all my expectations with the latest issue.

I am a fan of *Doctor Who*, and your article written by none other than David Howe was great to see. Granted, the information about the show's possible demise in your editorial was dated; but, the overall effort of the magazine to bringing *Doctor Who* to the public has won me over for good.

Also, I enjoyed the variety of media reviewed in the last issue — from television to CD-ROM.

Keep up the good work ... oh, one more thing. My only gripe with your magazine — when will it go monthly?!

Mike Magro  
Philadelphia, Pa.

It is amazing how rapidly things change, and at the time we ran David Howe's article things were looking pretty dour for the Doctor. By the time you read this, the first telefilm will be in post-production. As for going monthly, we won't change our frequency unless we are sure we can continue to maintain our high standards, which we currently find difficult enough every other month.

Dear Sir:

I particularly enjoyed the article about *Forever Knight* in the December issue, and the article about "From Dusk Till Dawn" in the



While rumors of MST 3000's cancellation on Comedy Central have continued, the show is scheduled to arrive on the big screen with their "enhanced" version of the sci-fi classic *This Island Earth*.

current (February) issue. I find the "vampire concept" entertaining, and those two productions provide an excellent contrast in approach to the topic.

Please write more often about *Forever Knight*. It's definitely one of my favorite shows, and I just don't see enough articles about these wonderful characters (the actors are pretty good too!)

Sherri L. Godsey  
Plano, TX

Thank you so much for the article "Life After Death" on the TV show *Forever Knight*. *Forever Knight* truly has risen above terrible time slots in syndication, little publicity, and several network switches to live again, and has gained a steadily growing following. It conveys a message about hope without being preachy, and appeals to the common human need to rise above adversity and win in what should be a no-win scenario.

Without the support of publications like *Sci-Fi Entertainment*, this little show might go quietly into the night again ... as its new network may be on the verge of staking it mid-season. *Forever Knight* deserves a better fate than this. I hope your magazine will continue to support the show!

Lisa Wolters  
MVRJasper@aol.com

We continue to support the show *Forever Knight*, its cast, crew, and fans; and we applaud the loyalty the show's fans have displayed in recent weeks. We understand from our friends at the USA Networks that there are concrete business reasons for their recent decision to discontinue the show. Should *Forever Knight* continue for a fourth season in syndication, we will be delighted to continue our coverage.

Dear Editor,

Help Save MST3K! The powers-that-be at

Comedy Central have decided to pull the plug on the show that first put their network on the map, *Mystery Science Theater 3000*.

On December 22, 1995, the 132nd, and perhaps final, episode was shot. According to producer Jim Mallon, "Comedy Central has indicated to us that they will not be renewing the series." Contractually, Best Brains, Inc., which owns the copyright on the series, is free to negotiate with a different network for new episodes, which can begin airing in January 1997.

Meanwhile, a feature film, a book, a CD-ROM, and a convention are all in the works for release this year; it's clear that the "Mystics" who love this show are out there in force. I hope that *Sci-Fi Entertainment* will help to inform the USA Networks and the Sci-Fi Channel of this opportunity.

Terry Brewster  
Minneapolis, MN

We asked Comedy Central about this; they say, "The rumors of the death of MST3K have been greatly exaggerated." On the other hand, we know that the Channel has many fans of the show on staff who are watching these events quite closely.

Dear Ed,

Read your article in my first issue of *SFE* and was wondering about your e-mail address. I am a great fan of Gordon R. Dickson's "Dorsai" stories and my favorite is *Lulungameena*. I was just wondering about the Dorsai BBS. If you can tell me something about it, I would appreciate it.

Doltahodjet.  
Ira D Shpritz  
Pelham, NY

Our old E-mail address, [flixman@dorsai.org](mailto:flixman@dorsai.org), is the personal E-mail address of editor Ed Flixman (me). Readers are still welcome to write me there, though our "official" address is now at *Compuserve*; the change was necessary because I may be moving West, and need a "national" address. Dorsai is an ISP (Internet Service Provider) in the New York City area that exists primarily for the purpose of providing Internet and other community services to the disabled and "at-risk" youth. And, yes, the founders of the service include some SF fans with a special fondness for Gordon Dickson, hence the name. More details can be obtained from the Dorsai Embassy website at <http://www.dorsai.org>.

We often cannot reply to our mail personally, but by all means write to *Sci-Fi Entertainment*, 441 Carlisle Drive, Herndon, VA 22070. E-mail has a better chance of receiving a reply; reach us at 75663.2701@compuserve.com. Be sure to visit the Dominion at <http://www.scifi.com>.

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